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SORRENING HIMSELF BEHIND A HUGE TUB OF AKAALAS, MAJOR MARRIOT HEARD ALL.

## FAIR AND FALSE.

### [A NOVELETTE.]

(Concluded.)

#### CHAPTER V.

APRIL came in with a wealth of sunny smiles, and soft, bud-opening showers, coaxing the tender young leaves to peep forth their virgin-green beauties. The tiny snowdrops were nodding their pretty innocent heads in the balmy south wind, while huge clumps of primroses, out in colour, vied with the bashful, though sweeter violet, when Major Mariot led to the altar Miss Carnegie.

Pearl ransacked all the flower-haunted nooks and dells to do honour to her father's bride, fashioning garlands and posies to deck the newly-furnished boudoir with her own fingers, for she loved wild flowers.

When its new mistress entered to partake of a hurried breakfast before attiring herself for the ceremony, Pearl ran to her with a kind smile of welcome, and a basket of flowers.

But the frown of contempt that flew to Miss Carnegie's face, when she saw the wild blossoms decking every table, jar, or bowl, made Pearl feel nervous and crestfallen.

"What induced you to fill the room with this common rubbish when the conservatories are crammed with cultivated flowers?" she said, in an injured, harsh tone.

"I thought you would be more pleased with these, because I picked them!" Pearl answered, tears of mortification springing into her eyes at the cruel rebuff for her trouble and kindness.

"Shall I go and fill the basket with others?" she asked, looking ruefully at the despised basket of primroses, violets and snowdrops.

"If you like; but why trouble about them? I ordered Peters to cut all the choicest exotics he has," she replied, coldly. "These odious field things must be thrown away," taking her seat

at the pretty breakfast equipage with a haughty air of proprietorship she had never assumed before.

"They shall not be thrown away. I will remove them to my own room," Pearl returned a little resentfully.

No trace of the morning's little *contretemps* was to be seen in the face of the handsome bride as the bridegroom met her at the altar, or her lovely bridesmaid Pearl, whose face, though pale as the snowdrops she wore on her corsage, was radiant with loving smiles to greet her father, who had vacated his home for a week previous to his nuptials to appease the exactions of Mrs. Grundy—commonly speaking, the world.

A crowd of the village folk pressed forward eagerly to get a good view of the bride; some of them curtsied as she swept out majestically on her husband's arm, but no answering smile of pleasure greeted their courtesy.

"She may be a bran fine lady to look at, but I'll wager she's not the genuine article," whispered the oracle of the village, the brawny

blacksmith. "Why, our young lady smiles at us and our youngsters like a May morning, bless her pretty face!"

"You're right, mate!" assented the miller. "She's not a patch on Miss Marriot, bless her winsome face!"

At this moment Pearl passed out, beaming with little smiles and nods of pleased recognition at young and old, who invoked no end of blessings on her sunny head; and a posy of wild roses from a tiny toddler, who positively refused to throw them at the feet of the bride, but flung them at her favourite instead, getting a shaking from her mother for her disobedience.

"Good-bye, my darling child!" her father said, tremulously, as he was starting off for his bridal tour. "We shall soon return and all be united again, far happier than we have ever been before."

"I only desire your happiness, papa," she faltered, brokenly. "Pray forgive me crying, dear dad," twining her arms round his neck in a transport of grief; "you and I have never been separated before. You will not love me the less now; you will promise me, papa!"

"Need you ask me such a question!" he replied, reassuringly. "I have given you someone else to share our affection; one who, I feel, has already learnt to love you almost as dearly as myself."

A look of pain came into her face as she recalled the incident of the morning and the wrathful countenance of the bride, in return for her offering of flowers.

"I hope so," she murmured, as he kissed her again and again, then hurried out to the carriage, where his wife sat with a sullen frown at the tender farewell between father and daughter.

"Savelling young fool!" she muttered. "Tears seem to be always turned on as will to catch the sympathy of men, lackadaisical deceitful mix! You shall have reason for real tears when I am mistress here, if you dare to interfere with me!"

Further sweet musings were interrupted by her husband entering the carriage.

"Kiss your hand to our darling child!" he said, animatedly, as Pearl's pensive little face leaned forth eagerly to catch the last glimpse of them.

She obeyed with a seeming good grace, giving immense satisfaction to the Major, who believed her the essence of sweet amiability and womanly affection.

Never had Pearl felt so sad and weary when she entered the house to take her position as hostess to the few selected guests. How heartily she wished them all away—anywhere; so that she could feel free to indulge in her sorrow! But, alas! society is a hard, exacting taskmaster, as she knew to her cost before the beautiful spring day waned into night, and she was alone to wrestle with her agony of soul, for she felt intuitively trouble was looming in the future.

A month later, when May, with its wealth of lilac, honeysuckle, and golden rain of laburnum, came forth resplendent, Major Marriot and his wife returned home, and that very same evening Mrs. Marriot commenced her campaign to rid herself of her step-daughter.

"What month shall we select for your wedding!" she remarked, in a matter-of-fact way. "Shall I arrange it for June, when the roses are blooming?"

"No, no, not so soon!" she exclaimed, vehemently. "Papa said a year; it is not near that yet!"

"Have you forgotten your promise! I kept mine faithfully; you will have to keep yours."

"Sir Olive is not in England now," she said, piteously; "you surely do not wish to send me away! I am grateful to you for not telling papa my secret, indeed I am, but I feel too young yet to marry. Besides, Leslie has not hinted even that he wished papa's orders altered."

"This is childish nonsense!" she retorted, pettishly. "You have permitted your foolish fancies to lead you into mischief, I might use a harsher term, but I will spare your feelings. I

fortunately found it all out before it was too late, and now I insist upon your carrying out the compact we made."

"Ask me anything but that," Pearl implored. "You would not force me if you knew how I shrink from the very thought of—of—"

"What!" her mother demanded sternly. "Of becoming the honoured wife of a handsome and talented man—a man thousands of girls would give their front teeth to captivate!"

"You anticipate my thoughts. I'll admit I do not feel fit to become his wife. I only ask for the time papa stipulated. Have a little compassion on me for his sake, if not for mine!"

"I refuse simply because I wish to save you from yourself. So be prepared for your wedding to take place the commencement of July. Delay is dangerous. I, as your mother, must insist upon obedience to my commands, knowing what I do. Heaven knows your miserable secret has frequently weighed on my conscience since I became your father's wife" (this hypocritically).

"Is your heart stone!" Pearl said, rebelliously.

"It will be if you dare me!" she answered, spitefully. "Mine is not a nature to be trifled with. The sooner you become impressed with that fact the better it will be for you. My honour is now bound up with your father's." (Oh, the mockery of the term from such lips!) "It is my imperative duty to see that you, in your vanity and folly, do not smirch or draggle it in the mire of disgrace!"

"If I how could I do anything so base. I may have been foolish, but never has a thought tarnished my honour," she retorted, proudly. "You are cruel—bitterly cruel—to accuse me of such terrible things!"

"We will cease this bickering," she said, sternly. "It is unladylike and disrespectful to one holding the position I do towards you. Tomorrow morning come into my boudoir, and tell me what day in July your wedding is to take place. At all events, you cannot accuse me of breaking my trust, though you have yours!"

"If I could brave all, and confess everything to papa," she moaned, when Mrs. Marriot, with stately tread, left her to her own bitter reflections. "She is heartless, and I verily believe hates me now she is papa's wife. It is too late to reveal my secret. Papa would scorn me for my deceit; besides, I should only make mischief between her and him, for I know he would blame her for not telling him the truth. What can I do to evade this hateful marriage!" In her misery she rocked herself backwards and forwards in despair.

"Lors a-mercy, miss, how you startled me a-talking so loud to yourself as you did! I began to think you was gone a bit queer in your head!" said Kitty, her rosy face full of alarmed concern.

"I never heard you," her mistress said listlessly.

"I knocked away, too, till I was afraid I'd disturb the master, but I beg pardon, Miss Pearl. Are you ill?"

"Not in body, Kitty; my illness is of the heart, that nothing can cure!"

"You don't mean to say you've got heart complaints!" she replied, in terror, taking Pearl's words literally in her simplicity.

"I mean to say I am wretched—so wretched that I would bless Heaven to take me in its holy keeping!"

"Oh! it's that kind of feeling. I know all about it, then. You have been quarrelling with Mr. Keith, as is your plighted husband. Ain't I right, dear mistress?"

Pearl shook her head dolefully.—

"It's that grand stuck-up madam then, who has been upsetting you," she pursued.

"Remember she is mistress of this house, and my father's wife!" Pearl replied, reprovingly.

"I only know everything has gone topsy-turvy," the girl muttered, audaciously; then cast down her face, ashamed at her temerity in being so bold as to express her opinions openly before her mistress, whom she would not vex for all the world.

"I am not angry, Kitty," Pearl hastened to add, to comfort her, "only do not repeat such

words again. Unfasten my hair. I am tired and out of sorts. Bedfordshire is the best place for such cross patches as I!" this with a brave effort to smile, that quite deluded Kitty into the belief that Pearl was somewhat hysterical.

"So you are going to run off with Keith before the autumn, you rogue!" the Major remarked, jocularly, a few days after his return home. "Who wants to leave the nest to go billing and cooing!"

"Mamma thinks it best!" Pearl said, with a shiver.

"Mamma tells me it is your whim; but there, my wee birdie is too shy to confess its little secrets to its dad."

What incalculable misery she might have averted if she had only been courageous enough to confess her love for Sir Olive, and her utter abhorrence to carry out her engagement with one whom her heart told her she had never felt a spark of true affection for.

The golden opportunity vanished, never to return, leaving her in the toils of a woman who determined to make a breach between father and daughter, or banish her from the home which she resolved to be entire mistress of.

"Well, July is the time," he pursued; "you and Keith have fixed in spite of my orders; so I suppose I must indulge you. What shall I give you for your wedding presents, bracelets or a necklace! as the time is very short, and I have to get some family diamonds set."

"I care not—that is, I have no choice, dad," she returned, apathetically.

"Then leave it to me and the jeweller. Perhaps that will be the best plan," he answered, cheerily.

If he could have seen the expression of blank despair in her wan face, as she turned to leave the room, it would have horrified him, but fate decreed to be their foe.

The next morning Major Marriot was seated in business converse with his family lawyer, strict orders being given that no one was to obtrude on their privacy.

"I cannot quite understand your wishes, Major," the astute man of law observed. "Is it a deed of gift you wish me to effect in Miss Marriot's interest?"

"Certainly, that is my desire."

"But you will find such a step impoverish your income severely."

"I have thought of contingencies," he said, undilatingly.

"As your legal adviser, it is my duty to point out the rashness of your scheme, especially as you have just married and may have other children. My suggestion is to give your daughter a handsome dot on her marriage, and bequeath what you desire by will."

"I desire the business carried out according to my wishes," he replied, doggedly.

"I have no alternative, then, but to obey your instructions, much as I would desire you had been guided by my advice."

"I have weighed well the consequences to all concerned; now my mind is perfectly at rest, because it's fixed."

"I never heard of such a mad act from a rational being in all my professional experience!" mused Mr. Bennet, in a whirl of perplexity, when he sat in his dingy offices in Clifford's Inn, amid piles of venerable old parchments and musty tomes. "Can there be something in the background to account for such an unheard-of proceeding, or is his head a little weak!"

The solution of the problem was more than he could solve, so he gave it up to go into other important pros and cons easier to decipher.

"Oh, miss! what do you think!" said Kitty the day before the wedding, her comely face beaming over with smiles at the news she was about to impart. "My Sam has actually come back all of a sudden to the Court!"

"And his master, too!" Pearl faltered, her face getting colourless as marble, and letting fall in her agitation a costly Dresden coffee-cup, which shivered into atoms, its contents staining her morning gown.

"No, miss, he comes to-day; Sam was sent



first," setting to work diligently to wipe her mistress's delicate white robe, and gather up the debris.

"Come back!" Pearl moaned, when the girl left the room, with a convulsive sob; "just as I had schooled my rebel heart to go through this miserable farce. Oh! that death would have compassion on me, and turn my wedding-gown into my shroud. To-morrow it will be a sin to even think what might have been; better a thousand deaths than sully poor Leslie's name."

The weary conflict which had robbed her of rest and all savour for existence was nearly won when this startling news burst upon her of Sir Olive's return; and now her heart and soul seemed torn by vain regrets that the wound was opened afresh she had been fighting so hard to keep hidden even from her own conscience in her mistaken notion of right and wrong.

A grand radiant morning, full of golden glory; accents of countless flowers found the bride-elect with young head bowed in anguish, the head which in a short hour hence would be crowned with its wreath of orange flowers. Vista-like shadows round her eyes testified to the mental war she had endured that last night in her maiden solitude she was ever to know.

"If you please, miss," exclaimed Kitty, in a fever of delicious excitement, her face aglow with blushes, rushing into the room with a box. "Sam has just brought this, with Sir Olive's compliments."

"Has he gone?" Pearl asked, in a strained, metallic voice.

"Well—er—not yet; he asked me to give him a peep at the breakfast!" Another conscious blush, and making good her escape to rejoin Sam, who was brushed and smartened to perfection to meet his lady-love, and was also burning with impatience to present her with a bottle of Jockey Club and some light kid gloves he had purchased in Paris. When she took off the lid there lay a magnificent bouquet of white exotics, and hanging from the broad satin ribbons a cross of brilliants, to which a tiny slip of paper was cunningly attached with these words,—

"A gift from one whose cross is almost more than he can bear, but he wishes you joy now and for everlasting."

She sat as one dazed, with the snowy blossoms in her lap, murmuring incoherently,—

"Joy everlasting; can there be such a thing for one so sinful as I, who would give life itself to be free!"

"What! Not commenced dressing yet!" Mrs. Marriot remarked tartly, breaking in upon her sad soliloquy, a shining apparition of silks, lace and jewels. "Where is Kate Read! her neglect is abominable!"

"I am weary, weary of it all!" Pearl murmured, brokenly.

"You are acting in a scandalous manner, you mean," she replied, heartlessly. "Have you no feeling for the man you pretend to love?"

"I never said I loved him! Bad as I am, I solemnly declare I am not so lost!"

"Why have you permitted things to come to such a pass! Do you not reflect upon the shame that will fall on your father, on me, and the galling insult to a gentleman who loves you sufficiently to wish no better fate than to call you wife!"

"It is the thought of all this which is crushing out all happiness from my life. Look at my face!" turning a tear-stained, sorrow-stricken one that would have brought pity from the hardest nature.

"I see a very unsuitable one for a bride, I confess," going to the bell and ringing furiously for Kitty.

"How dare you leave Miss Marriot!" she said, wrathfully, towering over the girl with passion.

"It was not Kate's fault," Pearl interposed, unflinchingly, brave to defend others against this tyrannical will of her father's, though weak where she herself was concerned.

Satisfied that her mandate would be obeyed, Mrs. Marriot gathered up her sweeping skirts, and betook herself downstairs to receive the guests.

Meanwhile Sir Olive paced his sanctum, tortured a mind and body.

"Craven idiot that I have been to waste precious time in trying to forget my love when I might have won her from him," he groaned. "What is honour weighed against two lives! Uster misery! If I could only bring back the past!"

Then seeing Sam returning from his errand, he bounded out to meet him. Why, he could not have explained, seeing that hope was dead.

"You delivered the box?" he said, quickly, not knowing what to say, yet hungering to glean some news of his lost love.

"Yes, Sir Olive, I left it with her maid, who took it up immediately."

"Is the b—" he was about to say bride, but he felt the name would choke him, "I mean Miss Marriot, quite well!"

"I believe so, Sir Olive, leastways Kit—, I mean Kate Read didn't say anything to the contrary," he replied, sheepishly.

With bent head he sauntered out of the glare of the sun and the joyous chorus of the birds, which seemed to mock his misery, and shut himself up to bear his heart's agony, unseen by all human creatures, except the all-pitying eye of the only Comforter who could give rest to his tortured soul.

"Mr. Leslie Keith has sent you up this lovely bouquet and his love," one of the bridesmaids said, hurrying in. "Do be quick and get dressed."

"Is he downstairs?" Pearl cried, eagerly.

"Yes, talking to your papa; he is just off to the church!"

Talking no heed of the costly bouquet, she rushed down the crimson carpeted stairs, just as she was, her heart throbbing madly, like pent-up waters unloosed.

On she sped till the familiar sound of her father's voice led her into the drawing-room, where he was conversing with Keith.

"Father! father! forgive me," she cried, distractedly, "I cannot, I dare not marry Leslie!"

"What is the meaning of this?" the Major asked, sternly, dazed with amazement.

"I am not worthy of Leslie's love. If I became his wife I should be wretched!"

Then turning to the bridegroom, who was aghast with mortified astonishment and wounded dignity, but who had sprung to her side and put his arm round her waist, she continued,—

"Forgive me, I implore you, and try to believe that what I am doing now is for your sake as well as my own. I have tried to be true!"

"Is this some nightmare?" her father gasped, realising the terrible position of humiliation her conduct would cause. "Why, we shall be the laughing-stock of every man and woman for miles round. I could have forgiven you anything but this!"

"Father, do not cast me off!" she begged, in abject terror, clinging to him desperately.

"I am overwhelmed with the gravity of the situation," he returned, almost harshly. "There was no pressure brought to bear on this match, and I solemnly believed you loved Leslie Keith. Now, at the last moment, you come and tell your affianced husband and father you cannot become a wife."

"I intended to go through it all," she murmured.

"It seems I have had a very fortunate escape," Keith observed, swallowing the affront to his dignity now the first shock of surprise was over, and feeling some compassion for the girl who seemed bowed in the dust, as it were, in shame and anguish. "Under the circumstances, you will excuse my remaining; my presence would only harrow up bitter thoughts and memories. That Miss Marriot has done right there is no denying; but the pity of it is the lateness of the hour."

"Go, leave me!" her father said. "I must summon my wife to aid me in this trial, the cruellest I have ever experienced," pushing aside the trembling hands roughly. "Go to your room, and ponder over the misery your wayward conduct has wrought on people who loved you too well."

With a lingering look of piteous regret and unspeakable sorrow she slowly dragged her weary

limbs out of his offended presence, and gaining her room, flung herself on her bed.

Enraged at being thwarted in her will, Mrs. Marriot took no pains to conciliate the Major. She felt this was her golden opportunity to widen the breach by artful insinuations, and scattered her barbed arrows right and left, yet assuming the while a friendly feeling to her victim, which entirely deceived her husband.

"I will take this unpleasant task off your hands, dear!" she said, sympathisingly. "You remain here. I shall simply say Pearl is taken suddenly ill, and the ceremony is postponed."

"What a blessing you are to me!" he said, tenderly. "Heaven knows what I should have done without you in this fearful crisis."

In a brief time the house was deserted, all the guests scuttling off with little hums and ahs to each other, and sundry wise shrugs, that spoke volumes as to their credulity being duped by the elegant Mrs. Marriot's plausible excuse.

There lay the untouched breakfast in the rose-decorated dining-room, and the bridesmaids, with its wreaths of snowy buds and crystal cupid's a very mockery.

And the crowd of anxious, eager people waited at the church, which was garlanded outside and in with lilies and roses. Flage waved in the morning breeze from every cottage that could sport a bit of scarlet; even the tiny gateposts were adorned with the spoils of the hedgerows, symbols these of love to their favourite.

But, alas! no bride came with dewy tears and smiles to see the token of their affection. The news spread like wildfire that, instead of sunny smiles and wedded bliss, Pearl was lying ill on her little white bed; and they all made their way homewards with disappointed, lagged footsteps, though their hearts were laden with earnest sympathy for the stricken young bride.

## CHAPTER VI.

AUTUMN found Waterchase gay and festive with a host of visitors, prepared for the onslaught with the feathery tribe, chief among the guests being a very old friend of Mrs. Marriot's, Mr. Leo Celli, a man remarkable for his white teeth, small hands and feet, and piercing dark eyes, half Spanish, half Italian, and whose chief characteristic was singing in a thin, wiry tenor Italian air from the celebrated Italian operas.

He paid marked attention to Pearl, who treated him with cool disdain in return, feeling an instinctive dislike to him that she could not define, for he was the essence of gentlemanly courtesy.

When the guests strolled forth laden with guns, &c., of a morning it was his invariable custom to be missing, on some pretext or the other, from the party; the charms of his old friend and hostess seemed more alluring than sport in the covers.

Many were the confidential *tête-à-têtes* they enjoyed, recalling a dark page in their history which would have surprised her trustful husband could he have been an eye-witness of this precious pair.

Sir Olive, on hearing of the sudden illness of Pearl, felt it was a merciful respite, that fate had played his friend for once, and called to make inquiries to see how matters stood, and was interviewed by Mrs. Marriot, who, with clever tact, kept Pearl out of his way, and led him to believe the marriage was only postponed till a later date.

He, of course, believed the statement, yet fretted and fumed because he was denied the bliss of seeing Pearl. The Major tacitly confirmed his wife's explanation, so he went away again hopeless and wretched, resolved to quit the scene of so much heartburning and cruel disappointment.

In a week's time Carrington Court was vacated, and he and Sam went on their travels again, much to Sam's chagrin, who felt it a bitter hardship to leave his pretty Kitty, whom he had bought a gorgeous garnet and turquoise engagement ring, and a big silver locket, with his hair twisted in a true-lover's knot on one side, and his likens on the other.

"I'm danged if I'd stir a blessed peg," he whispered into Kitty's ear the night before they started, "only he's such a brack of a master, and I wouldn't leave him in the lurch not for a thousand golden sovs! He's got a heart as gentle and kind as any baby when you comes to know him; and he's mightily hipped now, lass. I wouldn't mind staking my Davy it's all about your pretty young misus."

"Nonsense!" whispered Kitty; "how you do go on! Why, he never comes anigh her or she him! How in the name of goodness can they be a-courting, then, Mr. Wiscacre!" and looking him in the face saucily.

"I know this, I don't like a sweetheating at a distance," he replied, emphatically, as he pinched her plump cheeks, and snatched a kiss; "but this I do know, though I mightn't be such a sharp chap as you are for a lass, that he went a nearly crazed the day we thought the wedding was going to come off."

Kitty was not quite convinced, though she felt there was certainly something in it all, and the pair dawdled about, wishing each other no end of good-byes; then remembering some last important communication, which had to be endorsed by a kiss; and, doubtless, would have continued their billing and cooing till further orders if the ever watchful eyes of Mrs. Marriot had not suddenly appeared on the terrace, and she summoned Miss Kitty in instantly.

Pearl lost all her merry ways, for a barrier had come between her father and her, which kept them apart. He treated her coldly, almost indifferently. The wound she had inflicted that July morn still rankled in his breast, fed by the cunning influence of his treacherous wife.

Left to her own resources, Pearl became more devoted to her poor pensioners, whose needs, aches, and pains it became her chief study to alleviate.

When at home she secluded herself as much as possible in her own rooms, shrinking from the society of her stepmother, who, she knew, to her cost, mortally disliked her.

All the guests had dispersed; yet still Mr. Leo Celli remained, much to Pearl's annoyance, who felt a repugnance for the fawning Italian, whose glittering, snake eyes seemed to follow her every movement like some evil shadow.

"Do I alarm you, Miss Marriot!" he said, in his soft plausible tone one evening, as he glided noiselessly into the conservatory, where she was seated copying a narcissus; and on looking up, suddenly flew to the door with a little cry of fright. "You are as timid as a doe of one who would protect instead of hurt so fair a lily—fairer than any among these!"

"I am not afraid!" she answered, haughtily, confronting him with a dash of her old spirit. "It was your sudden appearance which startled me when I thought I was alone!"

"Is it so very enjoyable to always seek solitude!" he rejoined, blandly. "It is purgatory to me to be alone!"

"Tastes differ, Mr. Celli," she retorted, curtly; "sometimes even clash." With this parting thrust she left him to bear his purgatory, as he styled it.

"She is a regular spitfire," he thought. "In spite of her gentle airs and graces there's fire in those eyes too. She evidently suspects something. I must caution Thyra. Perhaps she has been playing the spy! We will have to be wary. She's not so simple as she appears!"

"To-morrow will be our opportunity, Leo," whispered Mrs. Marriot; "the Major will be in town. He cannot possibly return the same night. It will be the safest plan not to commence our search until the household have retired for the night."

"But why bother about the will if you are sure he has done what is right for you?"

"How dense you are!" she pouted, tapping him coquettishly with her fan. "I tell you there is some secret I must and will fathom connected with Pearl! I would stake my life she is not what she seems. I heard the lawyer say distinctly, 'You will impoverish those belonging to you by this deed of gift to your daughter.' What could be the meaning of such words? It would

kill me if I thought I had sold myself to a man who would leave me a paltry pittance so that this obit of a girl may be rich."

"Even so, I cannot see what steps you could take to alter it if we find it!" he suggested.

"How simple you are! Why I should move heaven and earth to compel him to alter it, of course."

"But how about this deed of gift? It is with his lawyer, I suppose!"

"I cannot say. I know the will is in the deed-box, as I saw it myself one day when he was sorting papers, and laughingly alluded to it and a miniature, too, which I caught a glimpse of and he snatched out of my hands, but not before I read the name Pearl Marriot on the back. Pearl's mother's name was Ellen, and a portrait of hers hangs in the drawing-room. There is some mystery connected with her birth. I have tried to get him to talk about the past, but he always gets irritable and refuses to answer me. You must run up to London and get some of the finest skeleton keys money will procure; there's a train after luncheon which will suit admirably, and you can return by the last down train to-night."

"What a pity you cannot get at his keys!" he whispered.

"It is a moral impossibility, he always carries them in his pocket; besides, this plan will avert all suspicion. He will never know how I have ferreted out his secrets."

"What a clever woman it is!" he said, admiringly. "If we only had enough money to live at ease, what a glorious time we would have!"

"You will have to learn patience, Leo; everything comes to those who can afford to wait. I can send you sufficient for your needs till something turns up to sever these galling fetters. One thing I know for certain, that his heart is affected seriously. The day of that upset with Pearl I thought he would have died, and he confessed that the doctor had told him he might be taken off suddenly at any moment through excitement or fright. It is this knowledge which naturally makes me anxious to see the will."

The pair of conspirators carried out their arrangements very cleverly, and armed with a goodly assortment of keys betook themselves that night to Mrs. Marriot's room to make their search.

Leo's nimble fingers soon contrived to open the brass-clamped box, and to her infinite delight she was able to scan the contents.

The stable-clock clanged out the melancholy twelve tolls, the funeral knell of the departed day; and Mrs. Marriot gave a little exclamation of exultation as she espied the black ribbon knot at the top of a document.

So engrossed did they both become that they never heard a sound, consequently the hall door opened, unheeded by the precious couple.

"Thyra," called the well-known voice of her husband on the first landing, which sent the life-blood surging through her veins, and made Leo Celli leap to his feet in terror.

"Great Heaven! we are lost," he gasped, in terrified accents.

"No, not if you are brave," she panted. "The room opposite is Pearl's. Go, I say; you can leap from her window. Go, I beseech you!"

Like a panther he sprang across the landing into Pearl's room, and thence to the window, like one distracted. As Fate would have it the Major, believing his wife was asleep, as she did not answer his call, retraced his steps into the dining-room to get himself a glass of sherry before retiring. Then something impelled him to have a cigar out in the moonlit grounds. After being stifled up in a hot railway coupé for so many hours he felt it would refresh him.

To his horror he saw the sash of his daughter's window drawn up, and the form of a man peer out, as if to plumb the distance from the ground.

Petrified with an awful dread he dared not analyse, even to his own soul, he stood beneath a quivering larch, to watch the issue of this night's adventure; when, lo! the man who alighted with cat-like agility to the soft yielding turf proved to be Leo Celli.

"Oh, Heaven!" the Major groaned, putting his hand to his heart, as a ghastly blue tinge

lined his mouth and nose, and staggering to a seat. "Oh, Heaven; would she had died before I had witnessed this proof of her baseness!"

Celli, perfectly ignorant that his exploit had been observed by his host, was passing on, to gain some admittance to the mansion, when the Major put out his arms, and shouted hoarsely,—

"Villain, you cannot escape. I have been watching you, vile reptile that you are. What excuse have you for leaving my daughter's chamber at this hour!"

"Only the potent one of love," he answered, with mock humility.

"The very term is accursed from such lips," the Major retorted, breathlessly. "Does love pollute the object of its affection, and cast ignominy and shame on the fair head of its victim? Oh, Heaven! what would I give to have a few moments of my old strength vouchsafed to me, to crush your pestiferous life out of your false carcass!"

Rage deprived him of further speech, and Leo Celli made good his exit, quaking with fear and fright.

"It is not much to do, to save the honour of your father's name, surely!" Mrs. Marriot argued, as Pearl, very alarmed, jumped out of bed, and ran to her stepmother's room, when the noise of the window being suddenly opened awoke her.

"I do not understand what you wish me to do, or why Mr. Celli dared to enter my room," Pearl said, nervously.

"Mr. Celli was alone with me in my room."

"What business had he to be in the room of my father's wife!" Pearl demanded, a crimson flood of maidenly shame mantling her face at the fearful thought that arose in her pure mind.

"It was by accident, I swear it, and I was as innocent in my motive as you are now. I had some important papers to show him, and never dreamt of the construction my rash conduct might impose. I am a wife, and the honour of a grand old name will be dragged in the mire if you refuse my prayers, though I am gullible of the crime the world would bring to my charge. You are free. An ardent lover may be excused for his boldness to obtain a few moments' converse with the girl he loves. I kept your secret, you will admit. All I ask is, keep mine in return. Think of the terrible issues at stake!"

"You wish me to say that man left my room, not yours! Oh, how can you ask me to defame my own fair name! Papa will spurn me!"

"Will you for a quibble give your father his deathblow! I tell you the moment he hears Leo Celli left my room the shock would kill him. He is a martyr to heart disease, and may die at any instant. Will you, his own child, take so awful a responsibility just to escape a few moments' displeasure from a most indulgent father, who will pardon the little escapade, and put it down to a girl's folly."

Such sophistry could not but have its effect upon the pliant nature of Pearl, and she gave the promise unconditionally.

The following morning she did not appear at the breakfast-table. She dared not face her father. She dreaded to meet his wrath.

"Your papa requests you to go into the library at once, miss!" Kitty said, looking very frightened. "And, oh! miss, he does look so dreadfully angry, and so white!"

Pearl's face filled with dismay at the message.

Her heart throbbed with apprehension as she neared the library, and she now bitterly regretted she had been led into such a trap.

To her intense surprise she found Leo Celli seated opposite her father, whose handsome face had undergone so marvellous a change that she shrank back appalled. Ten years were added to it, and in place of its wonted genial smile, a dark lowering frown clouded his brow, which portended coming trouble.

"Take a seat, Miss Marriot," he commenced, frigidly.

The cruel tone and term, "Miss Marriot," cut her to the quick. Quivering from head to foot she obeyed him, gazing at the two men with an agony of suspense painful to witness.

"I sent for you," he continued, "to inform



you that after last night's infamous proceedings there is but one course open for me as your father to pursue. The honour of my family demands you instantly becoming the wife of Mr. Celli!"

"No! no!" Pearl cried, vehemently putting out her hands as if to ward off some awful calamity.

"I say, nay—command it!" he thundered, furiously. "I will permit no degraded hussy to bear my name—a name that has given its best blood for honour's sacred cause."

"Papa!—papa! listen—oh, in pity, listen!" she entreated, but in vain. He was inexorable.

"I beg you to be considerate enough in this instance to keep silent and listen to me. Mr. Celli has consented to repair, as far as man can, the cruel insult he has put on a member of my household. He prepared to accompany me to London, with the view of a private marriage to-morrow morning. We start at 10.35."

Had he pronounced a sentence of death it could not have rendered her sufferings more poignant.

"Kill me rather than that," she murmured, trying to rise—her pretty face livid, her eyes wide open, but tearless.

"I would give all I possess in this world if you had never been born," he retorted, bitterly, callous to the pain he was inflicting in his supposed righteous wrath.

She tried to reach the door, but a sudden dizziness whirled through her poor dazed brain, and with a convulsive effort to say something before she left his presence she tottered, reeled, and fell to the floor before Celli could catch her. Even he, villain that he was, felt a pang of regret and remorse at the infamous part he had played, now that he saw the result.

No glimpse of pity escaped the Major for his stricken child. He simply requested Celli to remove her to her apartment, remarking with biting irony,—

"She will soon be your wife in the sight of the world. Therefore I depute to you the duty."

Very gently the Italian raised her up, and carried her to her room, feeling by no means comfortable in his mind at the result of his night's adventure.

## CHAPTER VII.

"Do let me bring you something, mistress, dear," Kitty pleaded, with big tears in her eyes.

"No, leave me, Kitty. It is the only service you can render me now," Pearl murmured, brokenly, when the evening was far advanced, and she had not broken her fast. After her swoon, in which the faithful girl had attended to her with true devotion, she remained in a state of torpor. Her pretty eyes glittered under their damp lashes, giving great concern to Kitty, for she feared the indisposition would end in fever.

"Just a cup of tea and the least morsel of dry toast," she perished.

"If it will please you very much," Pearl replied.

She tried to make a pretence to eat the toast and drink the tea to satisfy her maid; then drawing her maid towards her she said,—

"You have been a faithful, good friend, Kitty, and I have a desire to show you how grateful I feel. It is a whim of mine, so you must indulge me," unfolding a crisp roll of banknotes. "Here is a hundred pounds, it is my wedding gift!"

"Oh, miss! it is too much to give me all at once!" gasped Kitty, overwhelmed with the magnitude of the sum.

"Take it and make no remarks. You and Sam will find plenty of use for it by-and-by; and now good-night, I am tired."

Instinct whispered Kitty to remain upon some pretext or other, to stay by her lady's side without leave; then her habit of obedience overruled the feeling.

"But I shan't sleep a wink, I know. The poor darling looks so weak and ill," she thought, as she shaded the lamp, and drew the curtains to the

window to keep out the moonlight, and noiselessly stole out of the room.

When left to herself Pearl started up, muttering wildly,—

"Better death, a thousand deaths, than marry that monster! Oh, father! If you only knew how bitterly unjust you have been to your child!"

Then a horrible dizziness again seized her, which she stifled by lavng her face and head with water.

Going to her writing-table she penned a few hasty lines to her father. Her jewels she scanned over, and selected a pearl and ruby ring, a present from her father on her last birthday; the other valuables she looked up, placed the key within the letter, and carefully sealed the envelope, and left it on the desk.

The cross Sir Olive gave her she tied round her neck with a piece of black ribbon, the remainder of her banknotes she tucked in her dainty little plush purse; then wrapped herself in her travelling cloak and hat, and sat waiting till she heard the coffee taken into the drawing-room, and sped downstairs like lightning, through the deserted dining-room, on to the terrace, down the steps, up the carriage drive, and out of the lodge gate without drawing the attention of a soul.

"Free, free!" she ejaculated, exultantly, and was lost in the weird shadows of the night.

"Gone!" exclaimed the Major, frantically, when the next morning his wife brought the news of her flight; his poor face livid with anguish. "No, Thyra, you have said this to alarm me. Do not break my heart!"

"It is perfectly true, for here is a letter. Read it; perhaps it will give us some clue."

With hands that seemed suddenly palsied he broke the seal and read:—

"DEAR DARLING PAPA.—YOUR little Pearl has gone from you for ever, because she loves you. It is better so, but as I wish one day to meet mamma and you at the foot of our Father's great white throne, I affirm I am innocent of one wrong action with Leo Celli. Your loving, though unhappy child,

"PEARL MARRIOT."

His face became clammy and drawn as he read these words, and the letter and key fell out of his nerveless grasp.

"Great Heaven!" he murmured, "I have driven my child out into the world to starve, perhaps to die, by my accursed brutality. I would not listen to her piteous prayer to be heard."

"What is the use of reproaching yourself?" his wife argued, soothingly.

"Reproach myself, madam!" he cried, desperately; "why, do you know what I would give to bring my darling one back under this roof! I'll tell you—life itself, for I know she was innocent of all knowledge of that scoundrel being in her chamber; if it was the last word I spoke in life, I would swear it."

"You believe her innocent after such incontestible proof!" she urged, wincing at his earnest repudiation of his daughter's guilt.

"Yes, for she never told a lie in her life, and she has solemnly vowed she was innocent, and I know she speaks the truth."

"You are easily duped by a plausible letter," she retorted, with vinegary sarcasm; "forgetting one most important fact, that an innocent girl would have no reason to run away, as she could better prove her innocence by staying and facing it out."

"Are you my child's enemy that you refuse to even believe my word as well as hers?" he said, bitterly. "Why did you invite that rascal to our home! He has polluted it by his loathsome presence; he is as false as the Evil One himself. I hold you responsible, madam, for introducing him."

A sinister gleam came into her eyes of vengeful hatred to the poor homeless wanderer, now that she could see her husband's trust had returned for his child.

"I think you are very unjust to put all the blame upon him, who, to say the least, has been

made a scapegoat, despised and jilted by a girl whom I know he loved, not wisely but too well," she answered, with affected feeling.

"If my daughter had cared for the fellow she would have stood by him staunchly. She gave up Keith because she did not love him! A nature that could show such dauntless courage at such a crisis would stand by the man she had permitted to cast a stigma on her fair fame. I refuse to discuss the affair with you, Mrs. Marriot, the scales have fallen from my eyes; would to Heaven they had never been blinded."

Seeing argument was of no avail, she withdrew in no enviable frame of mind to consult with her confederate.

"The game's up," he said despondently; "the sooner you and I cut it the better."

"I!" she said. "Are you crazed! Why, this is the very opportunity I have been longing for, to have the field to myself. When he gets more resigned and calm I shall be able to turn him round my little finger, and worm out all his secrets."

"I tell you he will baffle you; he suspects you had some hand in the other night's business, by what you tell me. My advice is to get all the money and valuables you can together and clear out."

"I shall do nothing so cowardly. I am his wife, and intend to stand my ground. She has gone away, therefore no proof can be forthcoming to prove I had anything to do with the affair."

"You stand in human shape!" muttered her husband, who had gone out on the terrace to cool the burning fire which seemed consuming him, when the voices of his wife and Celli in excited converse arrested his attention. Screening himself behind a huge tub of scales, he heard all.

"I will foil your plans," he said, fiercely. "You Jezebel, whom I took to my heart and home, and nurtured. You shall see what hate and revenge can do."

And they went, conversing on their future plans, perfectly unaware of the fearful volcano—of terrible wrath—they had raised in the breast of the Major, who carried out in his nature the proverb—beware of the anger of a good-natured man.

The next day he started for town, and made a new will before leaving; he had an interview with Celli, requesting his immediate departure from Waterhouse, but carefully concealed his bitter feelings beneath a frigid indifference that baffled the wily Italian to unravel.

His conduct to his wife was outwardly unchanged, except for one circumstance, that he changed his apartment, taking himself into his dressing-room to sleep, alleging as an excuse his disturbed frame of mind, and a desire to be alone.

"What a strange freak!" Mrs. Marriot thought, and then the subject dropped.

The Major employed a private detective to search for Pearl before leaving London; then returned to his home, which now was full of bitter memories.

## CHAPTER VIII.

"FOR Heaven's sake, ma'am, come to the master!" exclaimed Ellis, in accents of fear, rushing into her boudoir without stopping to knock.

"What is the matter!" gasped his mistress, rising from her dainty breakfast with a white face. "Is he ill! Speak, man, can't you?"

"My poor master is—lying all stark and cold on the floor in the library," he blurted out, shivering as if with mortal fear.

It was too true—something had occurred in the long, dreary watch of the still night. A black-plumed messenger had visited the Major and borne him from all earthly trials to his last home, just as he was writing a pathetic letter of love and self-reproach to his beloved child.

"Pardon your erring, but remorseful father, who can never pardon himself for his blindness," were the last words his hand had traced; the rest of the letter remained unfinished.

"Merciful Heaven, he is dead!" his wife screamed, on bending down and feeling his icy hand and heart, that was stilled for ever.

Poor Ellis looked at his dead master with tears running down his furrowed cheeks, a picture of grief, for he was devotedly attached to the genial, kind-hearted Major.

"Go and get a doctor—get someone, instead of standing anivelling like one demented."

With a shrug he obeyed, muttering,—

"No doctor will bring the poor master alive, ma'am, or I'd run with the wind."

Soon the place was hushed, and the household crept about the close-drawn blinded rooms in stealthy silence.

On the fifth day Major Marriot was laid in the family vault amid all the grand trappings of purchasable woe, while the widow donned the coolest of dull dead silks, and the sweetest thing in widow's bonnets straight from Madame Louise, the Court milliner.

After the funeral the family lawyer apprised her that a fresh will had been made, subject to his daughter's restoration to her home.

It was a keen blow to her to be left in the dark as to this change in his plans; but a sinister hope inspired her to believe Pearl had made away with herself in her terrible anguish, as no tidings had reached Waterchase of the missing girl.

"Of course, I am wholly and solely mistress here until this girl is discovered!" she observed, haughtily.

"Yes, madam, wholly and solely mistress," he repeated, "till Miss Marriot returns."

"In the event of that occurring I shall provide for her, of course," she replied.

"The will, I believe, will arrange that matter, madam," he said, with vinegary sarcasm, that even she could not help noticing.

"It is not likely he would beggar his widow for so wilful and disobedient a daughter!" she argued; "he was too justly incensed at her shameless conduct."

"It is not my business to discuss my late client's wishes or his daughter," he returned, brusquely, gathering up his papers, and making a hasty retreat.

"Detestable man! a perfect bear!" she muttered. "Leo shall deal with you in the future. Till I am able to withdraw all business away from you!"

"Her pride will get a fall!" thought Mr. Bennitt, chuckling, as he made his way to the station. "I must redouble my energies to find Miss Marriot. What a scene there will be by-and-by!"

In the meanwhile Pearl had sought oblivion in the vortex of busy teeming London, and found a safe asylum in breezy, open Kilburn with a governess, a friend of the past, who had stayed with them abroad for a year, and who, in compliance with Pearl's petition, promised to keep her secret, and keep it faithfully.

When her money began to run short she commenced some small water-colour sketches, and was most fortunate in disposing of them to her infinite satisfaction.

"I have a proposition to make to you, Miss Shaw," the manager of the firm said one day when she brought her small parcel as usual for sale. "One I think which will please you!"

"Thanks, very much!" she answered, in her mellow, soft voice, untying her sketches.

"We have a stand at the Exhibition to exhibit our pictures and works of art every year. Now it lies in my power to appoint you as the attendant at the coming one. Will you accept it?"

"Oh! yes, gratefully," she replied, eagerly; "it is just the position I should like above all things," a sudden thought occurring to her that in the bustle and turmoil of such a life she could crush down bitter memories and vain longings.

So it came about that in May Pearl Marriot, known now as Miss Shaw, took her station behind the stand committed to her charge.

Even Royalty itself stopped at the stand to admire the sweet young attendant rather than the many trifles scattered about with artistic

carelessness, and the Royal males cast many open and furtive glances in her direction.

The dazzling scene amazed Pearl, and certainly distracted her from all past memories, as gorgeously arrayed Cingalese and Parsees, blazing with silver and gold embroidery, flitted by, mingling with the bright yellow and pink satin mantles and sparkling jewels of the Oriental ladies, who seemed to challenge the splendid uniforms of the gallant sons of Mars, who mustered strong.

"Just look at that beautiful girl, Carington. By George! she's got some fine diamonds on her neck too!" remarked a distinguished man with a white moustache and dark eyes. "Quite out of the usual style; I shall try and purchase something of her!"

Sir Olive, for it was no other than he, who had indulged his friend's earnest solicitation to stroll in and see the show, being in London for a few days, suddenly glanced in the direction indicated, and saw to his utter astonishment, his lost love, Pearl Marriot, with his wedding-gift sparkling on her bosom.

"Am I dreaming!" he ejaculated, excitedly, pushing through the crowd, his whole face radiant with joy as he neared the counter.

"Pearl!" whispered his well-remembered voice which sent a rush of rosy colour into her face, and a thrill of unspeakable delight through every fibre of her being. "Thank a merciful Providence I have found you at last!"

Unmindful of the throng pressing round and about them, their hands met in one fervent burning clasp that spoke the language each heart dare not express.

"I am so pleased—so pleased," she faltered. "Have you been home, and have you seen papa?"

A blank look came into his face as her pointed question, for it told him she had not learnt the sad news of her loss; so he parried the question, feeling this was not the opportunity to reveal to her the truth.

Very gently and tenderly he broke the sorrowful intelligence to her that evening when she left the Exhibition.

Her anguish was terrible to witness while it lasted, but his love and sympathy strengthened her to a considerable extent.

Those who visited the Exhibition the following day found another attendant at the stand Pearl had graced with her sweet presence. Many of her would-be admirers went away very crestfallen at their disappointment.

Mr. Bennitt waited upon Pearl, and disclosed to her the contents of her father's last will, also the secret of her birth.

"I am perfectly bewildered," she said, as he went on, "not the child of Ellen Marriot. Then who am I?"

"The daughter of Pearl Marriot, a lovely girl in humble life, whom he loved passionately and devotedly, and married three months after the first Mrs. Marriot's death, which took place nine months' after marriage, and who was thrust upon him by his mother. At your birth your mother died, and the temptation seized your father to pass you off to the world as the child of his first wife, who was the niece of an earl. Ambition for your future was the ruling passion of his life. When you were supposed to marry Mr. Keith he made a deed of gift determining to keep the secret for ever. Your refusal to marry him overthrew his plans; then certain proofs of base treachery practised by his wife came to his knowledge, proving your undoubted innocence, the result being this new will and a confession of a secret he had intended to die with." Then the lawyer stole away, leaving her father's last message.

Many were the tears of love and pity shed as she listened to this strange confession from the dead.

"With all her heart your child forgives you," she murmured, when the Major's last letter was read. "Heaven, in its infinite love and pity, be merciful to one who has suffered much, and erred through love."

She laid her throbbing head on the table, and sobbed blessed tears that eased her stricken heart. Then a caressing hand fell on her soft

coils of hair, and a voice, tremulous with emotion, said,—

"My heart's best love; do not weep! then he drew her to his breast. "This for henceforth must be your haven, and I your comforter!"

She gazed up into Sir Olive's eyes, a light in hers kindled as if by magic, and in very maiden timidity she veiled hers, and became dizzy with excess of joy.

"Speak, my love! Make me bliss with the assurance I am thirsting to hear from your dear lips!"

"Olive, dear Olive, I—I love you!" she murmured, in a tremulous voice, but loud enough for his sharpened senses to catch.

Such a sacred scene belonged only to the pair of united lovers, so we will leave them to their new-born bliss.

Six months have elapsed since Pearl returned to Waterchase, and she was now the wife of Sir Olive Carington.

Mrs. Marriot was compelled to abdicate, after a severe tussle with Mr. Bennitt, who was deputed to allow her one hundred a year for life, which Pearl, in her generosity, increased to four hundred, thus repaying good for evil.

Armed with this pitiful pittance, as the widow termed it, she went abroad and married Ocell.

Kitty and Sam had become man and wife, and were installed in the pretty lodge at the Court, where Lady Carington and her dotting husband mostly lived.

Chaplets of lovely fresh flowers were daily placed on the tomb of Major Marriot; and as time rolled on, a pair of tiny rosy fingers helped to weave wreaths of snowdrops and violets for "dear danna's bed of flowers," as little Pearl would say wistfully, as she helped her mother in her loving task to the dead, whom she revered and loved, in spite of his one mistake.

[THE END.]

## THE WIFE'S DEBT.

—30—

### CHAPTER I.

JOHN LACY was head clerk in the business establishment of Whitmore and Co., in the large manufacturing town of Storocheater. From the time John first entered Mr. Whitmore's counting-house it had been his ambition to have a home of his own and a wife.

For some years he had toiled on, living in dingy lodgings, and denying himself everything but the bare necessities of life, to save the money requisite for furnishing the long-dreamed-of little mansion, and starting in life comfortably.

His future wife's friends he knew could not do anything towards the expenses of their married life, for Emily Wilson was the only child of an old soldier, whose pension would die with him.

She had received a good education from her mother, and was in a situation until such time as John could offer her a home of her own. Emily refused to be a burden upon her parents, whose narrow income barely sufficed for their own comfortable support.

And now John's dream was realised. A cozy little house was taken and furnished; a fortnight's holiday from the office was obtained, during which time Emily became Mrs. Lacy; a few days' sojourn in the country, and then back to the little house at Storocheater, which was henceforth to be their home.

Home! how John's heart thrilled at the word. Yes, he, too, now had a home; and more, he had the wife of his heart, for whom he had so long patiently waited and toiled.

John Lacy was eminently a man of method; and as soon as they were settled in their home proceeded to lay before his wife his plans for regulating their household accounts. All bills were to be settled every quarter; and so, John said, they would know how they were going on. He then informed Emily that he wished her to have a certain annual sum for her own dress and



expenditure; and he placed six pounds in her hands as her first quarter's instalment, cautioning her with a smile, not to run into debt.

Emily smiled too, she did not think the caution much needed, as half the sum her husband allowed her generally covered her wardrobe expenditure; and, like John, she had been carefully saving during the four years of their engagement, so as to provide, with a little assistance from her parents, a respectable outfit for her marriage.

Six months had passed happily away; the long winter evenings had seemed all too short to the happy pair as they sat by their own fireside, all the more enjoyed for the occasional breaks in the form of evening visits to their friends, for they had a pleasant circle of acquaintances, all of whom considered it necessary to show their respect for the newly-married pair by inviting them once at least.

The spring was rapidly advancing, and Emily began to consider how she could lay out her scarcely touched allowance to the best advantage, in the purchase of a seasonable dress.

She was pondering one morning on this all-important subject, when the door-bell rang, and her little maid-servant announced that a gentleman wished to speak with her.

"Show him in," said Emily, and a dark man made his appearance.

"I have taken the liberty of calling, madam," he began, "to inform you that I am now travelling with new spring goods of all descriptions—mostly French. They are of the latest style, and having imported them myself, I am enabled to offer them at a much lower price than you would usually purchase them in the shops. Will you permit me to show them to you?"

"Thank you," said Emily, "but I really do not know that I require anything."

"Only permit me to show you what I have," urged Mr. Dennis, for that was the stranger's name. "You need not purchase if you do not wish it, but I should like you to see the contents of my cases."

"There can be no harm in looking," thought Emily, and the man, seeing her hesitation, at once brought in a large leather case from the entrance, where he had left it, and proceeded to exhibit sundry elegant coats, skirts, and so forth.

"Remember, I have not promised to buy," said Emily, as she watched dress after dress unfolded and laid out on the chairs and tables.

"Oh, dear, no," said Mr. Dennis, blandly: "It is a pleasure to show them to a lady of your taste; and," he added, speaking in a more confidential tone, and moving nearer to Emily, "I take cut-off wardrobes; if you have any old dresses or hats you have done with, I will give you their full value in exchange."

There was a fresh inducement to Emily, who had already begun to cast very admiring glances at a pretty spring dress and a new style of coat which Mr. Dennis had displayed; they were both more expensive than she wished, but she knew she had two or three articles of apparel which she had already decided were hardly worth putting away for another winter, and she hoped that with the help of these she might bring the price of the much-coveted articles within her reach.

Her countenance fell when Mr. Dennis, after examining the well-worn dresses with a critical eye, mentioned a few shillings as the extent of their value; he hesitated, looked again at the dress, and at last consented to take five pounds and her old winter garments. It was more, by a great deal, than she had thought of allowing herself to spend on these two items, but then she considered they were a great deal handsomer than she could have got for the money at any of the shops.

In the evening Emily exhibited her purchases to her husband, who duly admired them.

"Paid for?" he asked, with a smile.

"Of course, dear John," was the ready reply; "they only cost me a part in money, for I exchanged some old dresses for them."

Somehow Emily did not like to name the real sum she had given for them, though it would have been well and wiser had she told the whole truth.

Six months more rolled on, and a little one was

expected. Emily was very busy in her preparations. John made her a liberal present to provide for the coming of the little stranger, but Emily taxed her own purse to the utmost to have everything very nice, as she considered.

The event was over, and Emily was rapidly recovering her usual strength and health. John, proud of his first-born, a fine boy, proposed that they should take advantage of his christening, and return their friends' hospitality, by inviting a party on the occasion. Emily agreed, and the invitations were duly issued.

A few days before the expected party, Emily was nursing her boy, and considering whether he was most like John or her own father, when the door was opened, and Mr. Dennis was introduced. He began by complimenting Emily on her looks, and the beauty of the child.

"May I ask his name?" said Mr. Dennis.

"We think of calling him John Edward, after his father and mine," replied Emily.

"Then he is not christened yet?" said Mr. Dennis.

"No," replied Emily; "it is to take place next Wednesday."

"Ah! then I am just in time; of course you will want a new dress," said Mr. Dennis.

"No," replied Emily; "I can't possibly afford it just now; I shall wear my wedding dress in the evening."

"What! at the christening?" exclaimed Mr. Dennis. "Oh, pardon me, my dear lady, but that would not be good taste. Besides, the dress cannot have worn as well as the wearer; she may look as fresh as ever, but the dress must have lost its freshness by this time. Now, if you will only allow me to show you, I have the most lovely thing; just suitable—there!" he said, taking from its case a delicate rose-pink silk.

Emily could not restrain an expression of admiration, and she asked,—

"What is the price?"

"Five pounds," replied Mr. Dennis; "but to you I will make it four pounds ten shillings; it is so exactly what will suit your complexion."

Emily knew this, and she sighed as she said,—

"Totally impossible; I could not afford half that sum."

"Oh, I do not expect you to pay for it," said Mr. Dennis. Emily stared, and the man continued: "If it is not impertinent, what could you afford to give? You admire the dress so much, you ought to have it."

Emily coloured, as she replied,—

"I have only two pounds left out of my quarter's allowance, and it will be two months before I have any more."

Emily felt that she was lowering herself in thus bandying words with the man; but she admired the dress so much that she had not the resolution to say, firmly and at once, "No."

Mr. Dennis glanced at her for a moment, and then said, with a light laugh,—

"And then you say you cannot afford it, when you have a regular allowance to do as you like with! My dear Mrs. Lacy, of course you will have the dress; and see (you will have it made low, I suppose), you should have something to cover your neck, or you will be taking cold, and it will look in better taste for the occasion."

As he said this, Mr. Dennis produced a small black lace wrap that exactly matched with the dress.

"Yes," said the shrewd trader; "and you will look most lovely in them; and as to the price, that is the last consideration—they are only six pounds five shillings both together; and to a lady like you I should never think of making any difficulty. If you like to pay me three or four pounds on account, you can do so; as for the rest, twenty years hence will suit me, or you can pay me two pounds at a time if you like; you will never know they cost you anything that."

Emily listened to the tempting voice, and yielded. She paid a few pounds down, and took the dress and wrap.

Mr. Dennis began to close his cases; and while so doing, he inquired if Emily had a suitable dressmaker.

"I ask the question, madam," he said, "because you know that dress should be made well,

and I have a friend who makes for a very few ladies, just one or two, I have mentioned to her; she certainly works and fits exquisitely, and if you will allow me I will mention you to her. She works chiefly for amusement, so that her terms are really absurdly low; I should imagine they will not pay her for the materials."

Once more Emily was persuaded; she told Mr. Dennis she would see his friend the next day; and the next day, accordingly, Mrs. Jacobs made her appearance.

Mrs. Jacobs took Emily's measure with professional rapidity, complimented her on her figure, and her taste in the selection of the dress, and departed, promising the dress in time for the party. It came; it fitted admirably, but Emily felt rather appalled at the handsome lace with which it was profusely trimmed.

"What would John say?" thought Emily, "should he suspect anything?"

So much had Emily dreaded her husband's questions, that she had not yet even mentioned her purchase.

However, the day came, and, summoning all her courage, she said, in a careless tone,—

"John, dear, I bought myself a new dress for the party to-night."

"Very well, my love," said her husband; "I do not doubt you will look very nice."

John said no more; and even when the pink silk was on, he only remarked that his Emily, somehow, always looked nicer than other women.

Emily's heart misgave her at these kind, loving words; but even then she had not the courage to speak out, and tell him the error her vanity had led her into.

Alas! this was only the beginning of her sorrows.

About a month after these events, Emily's mother died.

It was her first great grief; and, though her husband's affectionate sympathy softened the blow, it fell heavily.

Six months more, and Emily's heart beat nervously every time the door-bell rang.

If Mr. Dennis should want his money, what could she do?

At last he came!

Although John had made Emily a present, mourning is very expensive. Consequently, her purse was very light: two pounds were all she had saved towards liquidating her debt.

She began to explain this to Mr. Dennis, who immediately stopped her.

"My dear lady," said he, "why make needless apologies? I told you to pay me two pounds at a time, if it suited you to do so; and you offer me two pounds. But see here—I have a lovely black silk for you."

"Oh, no!" exclaimed Emily; "I must not buy anything more to-day; indeed I shall not," she added, firmly.

"I beg your pardon, I must have misunderstood you then," said Mr. Dennis; "you wish to close your account with me; I shall have to trouble you for two pounds five shillings more in that case. My bill against you is four pounds five shillings."

"But," stammered Emily, "I thought I was to pay you as I could!"

"Certainly, if you continue to deal with me," said Mr. Dennis; "but now if you get your dresses elsewhere—you must have dresses; and if you do not buy of me, you must off someone else—it is only fair to settle one account before you begin another." Then, changing his tone, which had been somewhat threatening, he added in a coaxing voice, "Come, we must not quarrel so soon. I do not want to trouble you; take the dress; I shall never ask you for the money. Why, bless me, many ladies take twenty pounds' worth of dresses, and do not offer me what you have done."

Emily took the black silk.

"Shall I send Mrs. Jacobs for the dress I ordered for you, if you like, I will take it to her," said Mr. Dennis; "she has your measure."

Emily agreed; indeed, she dared not refuse. She felt she was in Mr. Dennis's power, and she feared to contradict him; even when her dress came from Mrs. Jacobs, and she found that it was a very inferior silk to the one Mr. Dennis

had chosen and shown to her, but she was silent. She could not appeal to her husband, for then she must have told her own folly and deceit. And so for the next two or three years it went on. Mr. Dennis called regularly, and coaxed or threatened the unhappy wife into taking the most expensive articles of every description. In vain Emily struggled to free herself, but she only sank deeper into the mire, for at last she applied the money entrusted to her by her husband for the purpose of paying household bills to satisfy the demands Mr. Dennis now frequently made for a few pounds on account. What was really owing, Emily at last did not know, but was completely at her creditor's mercy.

Poor Emily!

Her distress was great, and it told both on her health and temper. Her husband often wondered what could have changed her so much; but the day of reckoning was at hand.

## CHAPTER II.

ONE evening John returned home with a grave, sad face.

Emily anxiously inquired the cause.

"Mr. Whitmore is dead," was the reply.

"Will that affect you, John?" asked Emily.

"I cannot tell yet," was the reply; "but I fear it may."

And so the event proved. Many alterations were made in the arrangements, and among them John was a sufferer.

He was summoned to the house of Mr. Blakely; and with many compliments on his industry and steadiness, he received a handsome present, in addition to his salary and his dismissal.

"Never mind, Emmy," said John, cheerily, to his wife; "with the handsome character Mr. Blakely gives me, I am sure to get employment again soon; meanwhile, I have saved enough to carry us on comfortably for the present. Thank Heaven, we have no debts!"

Emily shrank, as though her husband had struck her, when she heard his last words. What should she do now?

"I must go back to the office for another day or two," said John, the next morning. "I have not quite finished everything yet, as I should like to leave it."

Emily watched him depart.

A painful feeling of coming sorrow weighed upon her spirits.

The hours dragged slowly along; she could not employ herself; and when the hour for John's return approached, she listened, with a feeling akin to agony, for his step, but he came not.

Two hours later than his usual time he returned.

Emily tried to shake off her nervous dread, and went to the door to meet him.

"What makes you so late?" she would have asked; but at the first glance at John's face her voice failed.

She had never seen him look as he now did, and she turned and followed him, trembling, into the cosy little parlour.

John carefully closed the door; then, drawing a packet of papers from his coat pocket, he put them into Emily's hand, saying, in a hoarse voice:

"What do these mean?"

Emily opened the first; it was a bill from Mr. Dennis for goods supplied during the last three years and a half, one hundred and fifteen pounds and some odd shillings! The paper fell from her trembling hands.

One glance at the pale, terrified face of his wife destroyed the last faint hope John had cherished, that some mistake had been made in the name.

"Look at them all," he said, bitterly, "and then tell me how they are to be paid."

The next was Mrs. Jacobs's account, fifteen pounds; the others were tradespeople's bills, which John had given her the money to pay, and which money she had appropriated.

"Now, tell me the truth," said John. "How

has all this happened, and how much more money do you owe?"

"This is all," said the miserable Emily; and then, with many tears and sobs, she told the whole tale of her folly and deceit, and implored her husband's forgiveness.

"I forgive you, Emily," said her husband, "but you have brought a heavy punishment upon me as well as yourself. These bills came in this morning; at first I would not believe them; but I was soon obliged to do so. I have since been consulting your father, and we have agreed upon what we consider the wisest plan; indeed, I may say, the only course open to me."

"This morning, Mr. Blakely offered me an appointment abroad, in one of their foreign houses. I at first intended to refuse; but now I have no choice, and I have accepted it."

"I cannot possibly take you and the boy; so you and he must go to your father, who has consented to take charge of you."

"This house must, of course, be given up; the furniture must be sold; and this, with what I have saved, will just pay those debts and my travelling expenses, and leave a small sum in your father's hands for the extra expense you will cause him. But, remember," he added, sternly, "I can pay no more of your debts."

"How long shall you be away, John?" asked Emily, amid her tears.

"I cannot say," was John's reply. And his own voice shook as he said:

"If I find it possible to make a home for you and the boy, I will send for you as soon as I can afford to pay the expense of your journey; at present it is impossible."

A month from that time found Emily and her child domiciled with the old soldier.

The little home was gone; the pretty furniture, bought with such loving pride, and paid for with the hard-earned savings of many years, had been dispersed among strangers; and John was on his sad and lonely way to a foreign land.

## CHAPTER III.

FOUR years had passed away, and Emily sat alone in a comfortless little room in a dingy house, which bore on its front window a card, "Apartments." She looked thin and old; for these four years had been full of deep, bitter sorrow to her. A few months after her husband's departure, her father was struck with paralysis, which left him feeble as a child, and fretful in the extreme.

Emily was obliged to engage the services of a young girl to look after her little boy, while she attended to the many wants of her suffering parent, her narrow means not enabling her to engage a more efficient assistant.

One day, Emily had sent her child out as usual, under the care of this girl, and was busily employed about her own duties when an unusual noise and crowd in the street attracted her attention.

They stopped before her own door; and in a few minutes the blood froze in her veins at the sight of her lovely boy, borne in the arms of a kind-hearted man, a mangled corpse.

His careless nurse had stopped before a shop-window, regardless of a rapidly advancing carriage, the horses of which had evidently escaped from the control of their driver.

In a moment, the little one had been knocked down and trampled to death!

A passer-by picked him up; and learning who he was from the frightened girl, carried him home to his distracted mother.

The old soldier lingered some time after the little one's death, but at last he died; and Emily was left alone. The loss of her father's pension obliged Emily to give up the little house in which she had lived, and to seek for lodgings suited to her scanty purse. With some difficulty she met with what she required, and removed her few articles of furniture.

Emily was sitting alone in her little room, considering what would be the best course for her to pursue. She thought of all her past life, of her happiness the first year she was married and all her

subsequent folly, and the misery it had brought; then she thought of her child; and here memory became almost too painful. She covered her face with her hands, and the tears streamed fast down her cheeks. She had written to her husband after her father's death, but had received no answer; and in her misery she thought perhaps he, too, was dead—another victim of her misconduct.

Emily's melancholy reverie was here interrupted by her landlady, who suddenly opening the door, said:

"A gentleman, ma'am, wants to speak with you."

Emily started up. A tall man had entered the room, and stood gazing fondly and anxiously at her. She looked again; surely—could she be so mistaken in the evening gloom?

"Emily, my wife!" said he.

It was John; and the next moment Emily was weeping tears of joy in her husband's arms.

"You will not leave me again, John?" she sobbed.

"Never, my darling, I hope," he replied; "I was preparing to come when I received your letter."

"Have you lost your appointment, then?" asked Emily.

"I have given it up," he replied, Emily, I am a rich man."

"A rich man!" repeated Emily.

"Yes, my dear, a rich man," said John, as he stared at him with astonishment. "You may look," he added; "but it is true. Do you remember, Emily, I told you that I lodged with an old Mr. Blenkin? Well, he took a great fancy to me; and when he died, having no relations—at least none that he ever acknowledged—he left all his property to me. I had always believed him to be poor; but I discovered, to my surprise, that he was worth nearly a hundred thousand pounds. The first thing now to be done is to seek for a comfortable home, which we can once more call our own."

"John," said Emily, timidly, "can you ever trust me again?"

"Yes, my darling, fully and entirely," he replied. "Otherwise, we should have little happiness."

"Then, John, will you please not give me an allowance," said Emily. "I would rather ask you when I want anything, and then I shall not be so easily tempted to do wrong."

"Very well, my dear; just as you please," said John.

Emily never again gave her husband cause to regret his confidence in her. Even had she been disposed to err, the sight or her recollection of that little green mound, with its simple white headstone, would have arrested her steps, by bringing to her mind the memory of those four sad years, during which she had felt so bitterly the consequences of her first debt.

[THE END]

## BROWN AS A BERRY.

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### CHAPTER XLIII.—(continued.)

"FORGIVE me!" he exclaimed, penitently. "I ought not to have spoken so."

She put her hand to her throat, feeling as though she must choke with the effort to say nothing of her real thoughts. Her fingers rest upon her coral necklace and unconsciously trace the carved pattern of each bead with tremulous and faltering touch.

He follows her movement, and, seeing what she is wearing, a hope so intensified—it bears a closer resemblance to despair—lashes him into eager, unconsidered rhetoric.

"Wait this one more moment!" he pleads, catching hold of her dress as she turns to go. "Remember I am losing you for ever. Let me fix every feature in my heart, with the sweet sunshine of your smile and the sweeter sorrow in your eyes. I never saw such glorious grey eyes; they will haunt me till I die! All men may not



think you beautiful, but to me you are more beautiful than I can say. Your dear brown face was a revelation to me of everything that was womanly and fair. On it I risked my all and—I have lost."

He stops suddenly, and she reaches out her hands with a little yearning cry. When he has said them they are silent—in that silence which is fraught with all the anguish and bitterness of our knowledge upon earth.

He forgets he has reason to think her false, she that has been already proved so. Eyes meet eyes, lingeringly, passionately, as lovers who meet only to part in that self-same moment. Lips might have pressed lips in a kiss that might not have been farewell, only that one is so staunch and strong, the other so innocent and true. A moment so, and then a hushed pause, during which the hands of each fall again heavily to their sides. Then:

"Good-night and good-bye," she says, simply, and before he can answer her, is gone.

Another hour's confused medley of music, laughter, brilliant lights, and graceful flittings in the dance, and then Berry finds herself hurrying through the fresh night air, Ronald walking by her side and his hand resting on the jhampan's edge.

A cool wind is blowing and rustling through the trees, the leaves glistening like silver as they flutter to and fro.

A jhampanier who has been carrying a lantern, from a dread of wild animals and ghosts, blows it out.

Timid as the native always is at nightfall, he cannot but feel the senselessness of his own fears now while the stars are shining so brightly and the moon-rays make the pathway as plain as if it were noon-day.

Ronald is a little quieter now, though still somewhat exalted and confused by the crisis that is so near, and the fact that he is walking by moonlight alone with the woman who to-morrow will be his wife. If he has not followed Ben Jonson's maxim to "love wisely" he has not neglected the context, which advises the love of "all women."

He is young and chivalrous with an almost extravagant reverence for his mother's sex. What wonder, considering all things, that he should have a special tenderness, I will not call it love, for this bride of his who is so winning and so fair!

Aversion is impossible to one of his temperament, and indifference is almost equally so, while his age precludes it too. The affection he has always felt for her develops into a sort of spurious passion, fostered by the surroundings and the hour.

"Do you know," he says, in an excited whisper, a serio-comic expression hovering round his well-shaped mouth; "do you know I am getting quite resigned!"

But when he stops to caress her hand with a vague notion of enforcing the meaning of his words, he finds it cold as ice; and though he looks eagerly for the least encouragement, if it were only a glance from under her downcast eyelids, she makes no sign that she has even heard.

#### CHAPTER XLIV.

BERRY does not make a pretty bride. Her face is pale and pinched, and the little blue shadows round her eyes and mouth testify to the vigil she has kept; while the redness of her eyelids speak only too clearly of the tears she has shed in her cheerless solitude.

She has breakfasted in her own room, and comes into the drawing-room dressed in her bridal robes. Her wreath and knots of flowers, freshly gathered, and fragrant as they are fresh, contrast cruelly with her jaded air and deadly pallor. On her small brown hand, grown so pitifully thin of late, flashes Ronald's diamond ring, and the same glittering stones are gleaming round her throat and in her hair, a very mockery of her grief and poverty of love.

"And so she moved under the bridal veil, which made the paleness of her cheek more pale,

And deepened the faint crimson of her mouth, and darkened her dark looks as moonlight doth, And of the gold and jewels glittering there, She scarcely felt conscious, but the weary glare Lay like a chaos of unwelcome light Vexing the sense with gorgeous undelight."

When she enters the room Colonel Chester is there alone, his hand resting on his arm as it lies on the mantelpiece. He starts up on her entrance and seems about to speak, but thinking better of it only walks over to the window and throws it open, as though he found the heat excessive.

At the same moment the parda is pushed back, and Mrs. Chester stands on the threshold. She seems to have robbed her sister not only of her rightful love, but also of the privilege of looking beautiful, which belongs to every bride upon her wedding-day, at least, and added Berry's charms to her own, which scarcely needed brightening. Her sea-blue eyes are glittering and hard, but they shine like stars, and her delicate complexion is positively brilliant with excitement, the small ivory teeth gleaming like pearls between her parted, scarlet lips. Her face, already fair beyond all praise, is made fairer still by the softening shadow cast upon it by her drooping, feathery white hat; and as she sweeps into the centre of the room, trailing her billowy skirts behind her, both inmates think it the loveliest picture they have ever seen.

Colonel Chester mutters something beneath his breath, and going impulsively towards her clasps her suddenly in his arms, kissing her fiercely over and over again on the cheek and on the forehead, for her mouth is instantly averted, regardless that they are not alone, then quickly lets her go, and hastens from the room without a word.

"A little conjugal display of tenderness that looks well after two years of married life," says Mrs. Chester, with a forced laugh, and then adds in a shocked voice: "Cold, how ill you look!"

"Do I?" listlessly.

"Horribly so! It's a mercy you have a veil," with a gratitude quite religious in its fervour.

To Mrs. Chester a loss of her good looks would have been the deadliest blow she could receive, and she cannot credit that Berry is able to bear it with equanimity—even indifference. Perhaps it brings home to her more effectually than anything else could the cruelty of her selfishness. For a mere, sentimental sorrow she has little sympathy, but this is such a practical misfortune and awakes her keenest compassion.

"I can't think how it is you look so wretchedly. The frock is perfect. I chose it myself and my taste in dress does not often fail me," she goes on, in an injured tone.

"The frock is all right. It is the wearer is to blame. Don't bother about it. You are looking pretty enough for us both."

"But a bride ought to be beautiful," protests Eve, glancing, however, complacently at herself in the mirror, and taking in every detail of her graceful toilette, with pleasure and pardonable pride; from the large picturesque hat down to the tiny embroidered shoes, and the softly falling folds of her gown and ancient Mechlin lace, all is faultless and correct.

"Brides are only mortal, after all, and you must not ask impossibilities from them," returns Berry, lightly, but a little forlorn sigh ending her sentence shows that there is no lightness in her heart.

A sudden feeling of compunction enters into Eve's mind, and moving quickly over to her sister's side she lays her hand gently on her shoulder.

"Berry, what a bad sister I have been!"

"Don't say that," answers Berry, hastily.

"Why not? It is true—terribly true. Bad sister and wicked wife. I wonder why such women were ever made. I don't deserve any, one should love me or be good to me any more," she concludes, tragically.

"Hush, hush, dear!" says Berry, wearily. Eve's penitence, like Eve's faults, are so strongly tinged with self and selfishness. This sweeping condemnation of her own acts is only harassing now that it comes too late.

"Won't you say you forgive me Berry?" asks Mrs. Chester, reproachfully.

"I have not blamed you yet, but I will say I forgive you if you like!" a little impatiently.

"You don't believe I am sorry?"

"Indeed, indeed I do! I think you will be even more distressed when you have time to realise it all. But I should like you to remember then, that I did not grudge the sacrifice."

"I really don't see it is so very hard for you as it happens," retorts Mrs. Chester, peevishly. "Ronald is not so hideous and unlovable as all that! Now if it were me who complained—" she stops short and blushes. Only the worst women and the worst men will admit that the husband or wife with whom they are mated is not all they could have wished.

"Colonel Chester was your own choice," is Berry's somewhat trenchant reply.

"If you are going to be disagreeable—" begins Mrs. Chester; but Berry prevents her saying more with a hasty kiss.

"Let us part friends. I did not mean to be unkind!"

And Eve graciously permits the caress—even returning it—convinced in her own mind that she has made the *amende honorable*, and a little hurt at the unfavourable reception.

"You are so cold!" she observes, meaning the complaint as an excuse, to which Berry nearly gives the lie by a hot retort and a fit of inconsequent weeping.

She controls herself, however; and has only just recovered her usual composed calm as Colonel Chester, re-entering, tells them it is time to start.

Eve and Berry go in jhampons, and as they emerge from the compound they see the different roads dotted with people who apparently have all one common goal in view. The lack of uniformity in their modes of conveyance would startle anyone accustomed to the rigid correctness of such ceremonies at home, where big bronghams and prancing grey horses seem an indispensable part of the performance, and almost add to its legality.

Colonel Chester rides a big charger, while Captain Burdett—who overtakes them as they go—bestrides a small hill pony more useful than elegant. Others are walking and some riding; but most of the ladies, like Mrs. Chester and Miss Cardell, are in their jhampons.

The level ground outside the church is crowded when they arrive, although some stragglers are still left upon the roads that wind in and out round the hills, giving very false ideas of the distances that must be traversed before their destination can be reached.

Conspicuous amongst all those who are already there is Mrs. Payne, gorgeous like the vivid colours of a brilliant morning sky. Her gaunt figure is topped by a hat, the like of which has never been seen in Rani Tal before, and bids fair to share with the bride the notice which should rightly be centred on her alone.

The Major, following closely at her heels, seems completely overshadowed, and looks rounder and shorter than ever as he keeps meekly in the shade cast by her voluminous person.

"They say the hat has another use besides the apparent one," whispers Captain Burdett to Eve, he having followed quickly in her wake. "They say she pops it over her husband's head, and extinguishes him whenever he ventures on an opinion of his own."

And Eve has so far recovered her self-possession and self-esteem that she can smile and answer to the jest.

Major Lennox and Lady Blanche are there, both anxious on Berry's account, and relieved to find she looks more like herself under the excitement of listening and replying to the frequent congratulations, speeches, and praises of her appearance.

Mr. and Mrs. Lee-Brooke, too, are full of less commendable curiosity, to see how this strange affair will end.

As Colonel Chester rides up he is met by a man with a telegram in his hand. He signs the receipt, and apologising to those nearest to him, leisurely opens and reads it. Mr. Lee-Brooke, who is watching him, notices he gives a start, and presses his hand to his heart as though he had received a sudden shock. Then with a

violent effort he recovers himself, and slips it into his pocket.

"No bad news I hope!" hazards the Adjutant, with his most funeral air, and an eager craving after new food for melancholy that is positively ghastly.

"No, no; nothing at all, at least nothing unexpected. It—is the death of an aged relative. Most people would call it a happy release, and I dare say she would feel it so after a long lifetime of suffering—suffering most intense."

"Ah, yes, exactly," returns Mr. Lee-Brooke, a little puzzled by such a burst of confidence from his usually most uncommunicative chief.

But if the bride had looked pale and worn before she started, the bridegroom, who comes out of the church at this moment—impatient if he may be supposed at their long delay—is even more ghastly in appearance.

He is sober enough now. There is not a trace of the excitement and feverish incoherence which had marked his actions the night before. He does not even deceive himself. As he looks upon Eve's face in all its radiant beauty he knows that, rightly or wrongly, he can never love another.

What other could represent to him all the lost happiness of his youth, all the passions of his manhood? What other woman ever was so exquisitely fair! She is holding a big white handkerchief over her head to shield her from the glaring light, and behind her the glorious range of Himalayan snows are shining like frosted silver in the sun.

So he remembers her always as she looked at this crisis in their lives, nor does any item in the incongruity of the scene escape him. He is even conscious of feeling some amusement at the sight of Mrs. Payne's hat, and remembers afterwards thinking that the lugubrious face of the Adjutant seemed less out of keeping with the rest than might have been expected on so festive an occasion.

But clear and distinct above everything he sees is the much loved face, which has become to him almost a creed, an incarnation of all it is human nature to desire.

He is staring at Eve so wildly and with such palpable despair that Colonel Chester goes towards him, frowning darkly. He lays his hand upon his arm, and looks fixedly into his eyes, with a hard and menacing expression, and at the same time whispers a few emphatic words into his ear.

They evidently take effect, for Ronald goes back into the church; and when they follow him, a moment or two later, he is standing waiting for them near the altar rails.

Then the solemn words of the opening exhortation commence. As they are slowly read absolute silence prevails, and the attention of all is centred on the couple who are so soon to be made one. During that moment's pause, while the clergyman is waiting for a possible though improbable reply to his inquiry whether there is any just cause or impediment why these persons should not be joined together in matrimony, Eve, heaving a deep sigh, slightly turns, and sees her husband make a hasty step forward and then as hastily recede, both hands pressed tightly to his heart, and the colour of his complexion more noticeable from its contact with the darkness of his glossy hair and thick moustache.

Then the ceremony proceeds, and her eyes and ears are both painfully on the alert to hear Ronald's reply to the first question put. It comes in harsh, constrained accents, scarcely above a whisper, yet said with such a sulky and ungracious air that even Eve is vexed with him for her sister's sake; and the dark troubled eyes of the trembling bride are lifted in mute pathos to his own, which are nearly hidden beneath his bent and stormy brows. Her voice, in answer to the same question, falls softly on the ear, like the tolling of a silver bell—and, but infinitely sweet.

"I will!" simple words, but promising so much; no wonder she grows frightened and doubtful of her own strength.

Captain Carew, who had stolen into the church unobserved, unable to keep away, yet suffering agonies at every sight and sound, dashes out again when Berry speaks and does not re-

turn; and a woman who is also present uninvited, startled into a sudden fear, moves nearer to the start.

"Who giveth this woman to be married to this man!"

No word in reply, and no given sign. The transaction has been iniquitous enough, Heaven knows, but surely it is too late to shirk the responsibility now!

A shuffling movement and a gurgling choking cry, and a wild up-throwing of the hands, that might either be a call for help or prayer for pardon, Colonel Chester falls forward on his face.

## CHAPTER XLV.

"DIED by the visitation of Heaven!" declares the clergyman, solemnly, willing to improve the terrible occasion, and then stops short, doubtful whether the expression is not confined to those who, by the mysterious suddenness of their decease, have come so far within the radius of the law as to necessitate an inquest.

"Nothing of the sort," is the testy reply of the medical man who had happened to be among those present. "I know it to be heart disease of a very aggravated type. It was only to be expected, and I wonder he has lived so long."

Colonel Chester had never moved or spoken since he fell, and the most hopeful have given up hope at last. Mistake, indeed, is almost impossible to those who have ever before been face to face with the King of Terrors.

The doctor has been irritated that his declaration had not been accepted at once, and has assisted very unwillingly at the efforts to bring back the dead man to life, protesting against the mockery, he unhesitatingly terms it, with every new trial. Now that his opinion is endorsed his usual good nature reasserts itself.

"We must get that poor lady away at once. I should not wonder if I had her on my hands next. It must have been a dreadful shock, and little more than a bride herself too, poor thing!" and then hurries away to where Eve is standing surrounded by a silent group of sympathising friends.

She is apparently stunned by the suddenness of the blow, and her face expresses more shocked surprise than natural grief. Somehow she has known at once that he was dead. It is almost as if she had expected it; and after the first wild cry that they would tell her "the truth, the whole truth!" she had collapsed into a state of stony indifference, a mental, if not physical, unconsciousness to all around. Both hands are resting on a chairback for support, and she is stooping a little forward, from weakness it may be, certainly there is no curiosity, no impetuous desire to forestall even bad news, in the heavy, languid eyes she lifts to the doctor's face when he approaches.

"My dear Mrs. Chester, you must go home," he says, taking one of her listless hands in his, and stroking it with kindly familiarity.

"You mean that he is dead!" in slow, tired tones.

"Miss Cardell, I give her into your charge. Take her away directly and keep her as quiet as you can," turning quickly to address Berry with unwonted cordiality.

And, in truth, it is enough to touch the hardest-hearted to see her standing there so utterly crushed, and so beautiful even in despair. How could anyone guess that there is more remorse than sorrow in her heart, and that innocent as she looks in her pure white gown, she has nevertheless been faithless in feeling to the man lying dead!

Even the bluff army doctor, who, to a certain extent is accustomed to these harrowing experiences, cannot view with equanimity such beauty in distress.

"Take me away, Berry, take me away!" she calls, weakly, and stretches out her hands helplessly to the sister who has never failed her yet, and certainly will not now in this her great need of sympathy and love.

The evasion has been answer sufficient. All present know that the physician's first decisive words have proved themselves correct, and all

with instinctive delicacy move away to let the widow pass out from the sacred edifice which less than half-an-hour ago received her as a wife.

All but one, who makes no movement to avoid her as she comes slowly along, her arms hanging by her side, and head bent like a lily broken from its stem, and drooping beneath the heat of a noonday sun it has no longer power to enjoy.

Berry, who is drawing her gently along, looks up in faint surprise that anyone should have the bad taste to linger there, and starts as she meets the large, sorrow-stricken eyes of the woman whom she had such good reason to suspect of feeling more than ordinary interest in Colonel Chester's fate. How has she felt this death, to which she has so unexpectedly been a witness?

She is leaning back against a pillar and has pushed all the hair from her face, as though its weight upon her forehead had been too oppressive to be borne. She is always pale, so that there is little change apparent at first sight, except that her exquisitely chiselled features are more clearly defined, as is seen sometimes in faces of the dead. It is her eyes that tell most of her thoughts—her eyes at once thoughtful and defiant, like a wild animal fighting against its pain.

She glances at Eve as she passes half-contemptuously, yet enviously, as who should say, "I loved him more than you, but it is you who have the right to grieve. You were his wife."

Her meaning is so plainly expressed that Berry can scarcely restrain herself from stopping and questioning her, who and what she is, that she haunts their footsteps thus, and aspires to feel an even deeper grief than they at the affliction that has so suddenly befallen them.

But remembering that Eve is with her she refrains. Besides, Major Lennox and Ronald May are close behind, and if there is anything to be confessed this is not the time or place to hear it.

And so ends Berry's wedding-day. One tragedy ended at the last moment by another.

She finds it hard to believe that she is free, that the difference of a few moments in the hour of Colonel Chester's death has saved her from the fate that had seemed inevitable before. She does not actually rejoice; good feeling alone would prevent that in the presence of the dead man's widow; but there is a deep-seated thankfulness at her heart, which, though it does not express itself even in her thoughts, unconsciously nerves her to help Eve through the trying days that follow.

Major Lennox arranges everything for the funeral, and takes upon himself to secure for them the solitude they desire, so the two sisters spend much of their time together, subdued and full of conflicting thoughts. How can either profess sorrow in the presence of the other, knowing what they do! They can only maintain a decorous silence.

All Colonel Chester's papers had been given to his widow's care, and she in her turn had handed them over to Berry.

"It is cowardly of me, I know, but I could not read them," she whispers, with a shudder. "You can tell me if there is anything I ought to know," and then leaves the room hastily, as though even those records of her husband's past life, most of them in his own handwriting, were painful even distasteful to her sight.

Indeed, there is something very awe-striking in these relics of the dead, something that makes us speak with bated breath and move noiselessly about as though someone or something were present beyond our human ken; and how can we be sure our instinct is not true!

Berry feels a strange thrill of reluctance at the thought of touching the documents without the owner's leave. He has been such a source of terror in his life, and something of his evil influence survives him. Still it has to be done, and without delay, for the will is amongst them, and the funeral is to-morrow. Almost the first she takes up is the telegram received an hour before his death. It is from England, which surprises her, as she thought it merely something connected with military matters.

She hesitates a moment. It is like prying into his private affairs to read it, and yet it is necessary, for may it not have been an indirect



cause of his decease, and it would comfort Eve could she prove that it was not only anxiety on her account had accelerated it?

She opens and reads,—  
"Mrs. Chester died this morning, conscious to the last, sent messages to you."

Another Mrs. Chester. Berry is aghast, and only breathes again when the name of the sender catches her eye, a man well-known in the profession, the address being that of a private lunatic asylum in the West of England.

It is his mother, dead at last after so many years of suffering, with not an incident to brighten or even moderate their dreariness; and in her last thoughts had been the son she had never known, whose birth had been the cause of this miserable existence.

What had been his feelings, she wonders, at reading of this bereavement, which was also a release, and was it a mercy in every way that he had died as he did? If he had lived longer would the effort of keeping his violent passions as far as possible under control, and concealed from those around him, have fostered the hereditary taint, and resulted in the end he evidently feared?

She tears the paper up. Eve must never know of this, or peace of mind would be impossible. If the knowledge did not exactly, as Colonel Chester had asserted, "frighten her into fits," it would certainly make her always fearful for her boy's future fate.

There are other important documents, all more or less connected with monetary and legal matters, then a little tinted note with a scent of hyacinth discovers itself among the heavier epistles, and falls fluttering to her feet.

Unwillingly Berry sets herself to master its contents, from a sense of duty to her sister only, coupled with none of the curiosity supposed to be inherent in her sex.

She slips it out of the envelope deftly, and sees that on the blank outside is something in Colonel Chester's writing—memoranda, perhaps, or notes suggested by a train of thought consequent on its perusal. Traced slantingly across is a proverb and its paraphrase:—

"Once hit, twice shy!"  
"Once betrayed, twice suspicious!"

and then below that again is jotted down, apparently more in bitterness than jest:—

"If a woman is false when she's twenty-three, to what depths of deception may she be calculated to have descended at the age of say—thirty-nine?"

A problem that would puzzle Colenso—I give it up!

Then a quotation from Congreve, a couplet which the poet himself had originated in idleness, no doubt, but which has been copied in cruelest earnest:—

"Nothing's new except their faces,  
Every woman is the same!"

Proved by me, on this 13th day of July.—ALEXANDER CHESTER.

He has probably written down these disconnected phrases, unconsciously almost, or as a relief to his overburdened mind, and fancied he had afterwards destroyed them. But disconnected as the several sentences are, they show something of his feelings and prove he has had no immunity from the suffering he has inflicted on his wife, and the poor little scapegoat he had chosen for the delinquencies of both.

There is nothing more, and turning it slowly over Berry reads the note itself:—

"Be content; I have made every preparation for going, and will not much longer annoy you with my presence. Think of me as gently as you can when I am gone!—ALEX."

Only these few lines, and dated the day before the wedding. Berry holds it between her fingers as though some subtle contamination might linger round it still. No doubt it is from that same woman who has pursued them so shamelessly and tried so apparently to revive the chains in which she had held Colonel Chester, and which he had presumably broken before he married Eve.

Berry, who possesses all the intolerance peculiar to even good women where their frailer sisterhood are concerned, blushes an angry crimson, and hesitates where to place this obnoxious mislaid, which in her eyes is so indelibly marked with the sign of the cloven foot.

As she hesitates, an ayah enters with a card bearing no name, but on it is written, in the same bold, free-flowing handwriting as that on the paper she holds in her hand, "Please see me if you can. I will not detain you long!"

"It is a lady in mourning like yourself," the ayah says, in fluent Hindostani, always eager to understand than the patched and piebald language one is treated with on first arrival in the country.

An indignant impulse prompts Berry to refuse herself. What right has this woman to dare to put on mourning and to force herself upon their privacy? Then she changes her intention.

After all, if she can spare Eve an annoyance she should do so. It surely will prove less trying to her to listen to this stranger's story and possible claim, than it would to the outraged widow; and if there is any disgrace attached it is better to keep it to themselves than trust even such an old, tried friend as Major Lennox.

And what right have they to bore him with their perplexities and trials? Doubtless he has sufficient of his own, and he has done so much for them already that is unpleasant.

She makes a signal of assent to the woman who is waiting, and then seats herself, resigning herself to the prospect of an embarrassing interview.

The next moment the "other Mrs. Chester" is in the room, advancing towards her with a stately step, but not offering her hand.

## CHAPTER XLVI.

"THERE WAS no name upon my card," says Mrs. Chester, with proud humility. "I am one of those unfortunates who have no claim to any name."

Berry draws herself up with a haughtiness that surpasses even that of the queenly woman before her, who has apparently outraged her with her presence, and admitted so shamelessly her guilt.

"You ought not to have come," she says, with an accent of grave reproof. "May I ask to what I am indebted?"

The other interrupts her with a half smile and gesture of the hand that is meant to waive aside all these preliminary politenesses, which are, after all, so seldom civil.

I wonder if Royal Eleanor sent in her card, when she called on Rosamond and spent five minutes talking of the weather before questioning her whether she preferred the "dagger or the bowl?"

The very proffering of a choice at all proves that in her case there was none of the ordinary coarse brutality of crime.

"I know it is an intrusion, but I wanted to tell someone the secret that has oppressed me all these years."

"And you chose me as your confidante—why?"

"Because it would have been a needless cruelty to have told your sister."

"And are there no other women in the world but she and I?" a sudden, undefined dread of what may be coming next making her face pale.

"None who would feel the same interest in what I have to tell."

She leans against the table and draws a long breath as though needing courage to continue.

"Won't you sit down?" says Berry, coldly still, but in spite of herself according play for the bodily weakness, that she cannot give to the woman herself.

Her visitor complies, and then sits there silently for a few minutes, perhaps pondering how she can begin.

"Have you no curiosity to know who and what I am?" she asks, presently.

"None at all!" is the laconic reply, and then

with a sudden inconsistency, "Who are you?" she adds, hastily, giving voice to a nameless fear.

"I am nothing, nobody, or worse than nobody. I was Allek Chester's wife."

"Oh, Heaven! then what is Eve?"

"Do not be alarmed. Your sister's interests are not harmed by me. I was his wife as I have said, but I have been divorced from him now nearly fifteen years."

Berry, who had started from her chair in an agony of doubt, sinks back again, breathless and only half relieved. By all the laws of man her sister may be safe, but what of that other higher law? Is there in the sight of Heaven any possibility of divorce between those whose union has been solemnised in the House of God?

"Those whom God has joined together let no man put asunder."

Are those words a mockery, that in the face of them there should be a court where the deepest wrongs of all can be cured by a golden salvo, and vows that should be binding beyond appeal, seeing they are taken for evil as well as good, can be broken with impunity?

Has the Church no influence at all in this our Christian land, and are the marriages contracted beneath the shadow of her wing to be as easily dissolved as partnerships that are constituted on merely business grounds?

Berry knows that Eve would never have married a man whose wife was still alive, had he laid the wealth of Croesus at her feet; and remembering Colonel Chester's uneasiness on his wedding day, she guesses he has known it too.

"I am glad you told this to no one else but me," she falters out at length.

"Why! Mrs. Chester is in no way to blame, and loses nothing by the fact of my existence," in evident surprise.

"Perhaps she might not see it so," drily. Another stare and then a sudden dawning of the truth.

"I see what you mean. In America they think so little of divorce," is the half-apologetic observation. "There it is merely a social matter, to be deplored of course, but quite a natural misfortune."

"You are an American?"

"Yes."

That accounts, then, for her uncommon beauty, and the manner which, imperious and graceful as it is, is not exactly thorough bred. It accounts, too, for her wandering about without even the shallowest pretence of a sheep-dog, the necessary dowager or duenna of other countries.

Leaving back listlessly in her chair, and with the traces of sorrow and remorse so visible as they are, she yet loses nothing of her loveliness, which is only etherealised thereby, and does not require what Byron declared was the essence of all beauty—animation.

She is such a grand creature, like the women loved by the Cæsars in old days, tall and finely moulded, whom one cannot fancy ever very young, or afflicted with the weakness of our present puny age.

Such a one must Cleopatra have been, or the mother of the Græci, and Voluptua, who boasted had Hercules been her husband she would have done six of his labours, and "saved him so much sweat."

"I should like to have told you all, but perhaps I ought not. It cannot be profitable to you to hear, and yet—"

"Tell it me, if it will not give you pain; you are too beautiful to be very wicked," says Berry, with naive candour.

The other Mrs. Chester smiles sadly, amused and yet a little touched by her reasoning.

"I never heard beauty quoted as a safeguard before; it is generally considered proof positive of crime. It was my unfortunate fate that brought me to this strait. Had I been the plainest woman that ever breathed I could not be so utterly friendless as I am now."

Berry is sympathetically silent, waiting for the story to be told.

"I am an American, as I said, the daughter of a man whose inventions made him suddenly and almost fabulously rich. An unexpected trans-



WITH A WILD CRY, COLONEL CHESTER FALLS FORWARD ON HIS FACE.

tion from poverty to wealth is always trying to—the sufferers I had almost said; and really it would not be so very far from truth. One ought to be educated up to riches, taught how to enjoy them from one's infancy. It is absurd to expect that we should know how to bear prosperity by intuition. My head was completely turned, and the flattery and adulation I received was—the beginning of the end!"

"You were an only child!"

"Yes, an only child, and I had no mother to care for me. My father was busy always. Not content with what he had already gained he must needs amass more wealth, or perhaps, to do him justice, it was honest love for the work on which he was engaged. I only know that I was left always to my own devices, and that this—this is the result. Thank Heaven, I never had a child. Yet, no! for I might have been a better woman so, and one can teach others to avoid the quicksands into which we ourselves have fallen. I think I should have proved at least a loving mother. We might have saved each other."

A tenderness that surprises herself has crept into her voice, and she stops a moment to recover the composure she has partly lost.

"I was twenty-one when I first met Allick Chester. He came over from Canada, where his regiment was stationed, on six months' leave. Having been unwell he was ordered to avoid the intense cold of the winter there. He was very little older than myself, and very different, both in manner and appearance, from what he had become when I met him here again after fifteen years. He was slighter then and had no moustaches, only a shadow on his upper lip. His mouth was always cruel, and his eyes as cold as steel. I remember I told him so once, and he only laughed; it was natural to him to be reserved even then, and I knew very little of him when he asked me to be his wife."

"Was he in love with you?" asks Berry, remembering his love for Eve, and curious to know whether such a man could love twice.

"He was fascinated and infatuated. If you

ask me whether he loved me as in later life I believe he loved your sister, I must answer no!"

"But you loved him?"

"Heaven knows I did, with all my heart and soul, false as I afterwards was. The day I married him I was the proudest, happiest woman in all the wide, wide world."

She holds out her handsome hands, supple, strong, but snowy white, and grasps the empty air, as though she would so draw back to her the vanished days.

"I loved him so," she goes on, dreamily, her dark eyes growing even darker as she speaks. "I thought I could be contented to adore, receiving only little in return; but by-and-by I missed the open admiration which before I had affected to despise. I could not believe in an affection that never expressed itself in words. And yet he was always thoughtful and kind, even affectionate at times, but the times were few and far between, and before I had been deluged by flattery and love."

"Whether he guessed the disappointment I naturally felt I cannot say; his self-restraint and reticence were so great—marvellous, I think, in one so young. But at last, stung into a transient feeling of jealousy by a flirtation I had begun in pique, and gone on with in thoughtlessness he spoke. I shall never forget how he looked. 'You have done me the honour to become my wife, be so good as not to disgrace the name we share.' It irritated me when he spoke like that, for I knew I was not his equal by birth, though wealth had given us a spurious position in the world. There was someone, too, whose devotion made his indifference (I thought it was disdain) more marked—a young nobleman who had once offered me his hand, and whose attentions had not ceased after my marriage."

"If he, who was certainly superior in social status, had not thought me unworthy to be his wife, why should the husband I had chosen look down upon me so? I was so galled in spirit, and so heartsore with the pain of knowing I was unloved, that I could not stay to reason. I never

thought my husband's ideal of what a woman should be might be the highest, in spite of the other's rank. A week after he had said the words which rankled so in my mind, his leave was up, and he had to return to duty. He was to go alone at first, and send for me directly he could arrange for me to come. 'Remember, I trust you,' were his last words, and knowing what they meant, I was angered more than ever. Perhaps he knew me better than I knew myself, but at any rate his fears fulfilled themselves. I was not strong enough to resist the tempting prospect of a life that was to be all love, no coldness nor recrimination."

"It seemed to lessen the wickedness of my lover's proposition, that he had wished to marry me when it was possible, and he was clever enough to urge this among his other persuasive sophistries. Women are proverbially weak. I was no stronger than the rest."

Berry looks at her splendid physique, feeling something like an impulse of incredulity. She seems so brave and strong, and yet, by her own account, has been no wiser no better than a Helen or Cleopatra where loving was concerned.

Perhaps Mrs. Chester guesses something of her thoughts, for she continues:—

"We are all weak, I tell you, and why should anything good have been expected from me with all my disadvantages of education and bringing up? It is owing to an accident that I am innocent in everything but intent. The train in which we went away together ran off the line, going over a bridge, and the carriages with their luckless, hapless freight were precipitated into the river that was running underneath. I was comparatively unhurt, but the man with whom I had fled was injured cruelly and beyond all cure."

Berry's interest and compassion are gradually overcoming her first rigid morality, and she heaves a deep-drawn sigh.

"Go on!" she ejaculates, breathlessly, and Mrs. Chester proceeds.

(To be continued.)





"SURELY THIS IS THE BITTEREST DROP IN MY CUP OF WOR!" THOUGHT MILDRED GARSTIN.

## MY SWEETHEART.

### CHAPTER XXIII.

It was rather a disappointment to Mildred to see that he could not touch any of the delicacies she set so temptingly before him. Even the sunny smile which she loved to see was gone from his lips. At last she took a book of his favourite poems and commenced to read to him Owen Meredith's beautiful, pathetic story of Lucille and her lover-knight's unchangeable love for the fair maid he so loved and lost; but for once in his life the tender words failed to touch a chord in Gregor's heart.

How was she to know that, he never heard one word that she read—that his thoughts were far away!

He was standing face to face with the present, not daring to think of the future as he reviewed the past.

Only one short fortnight before, when he had thought of his future, it had been with a clear sense of happiness and rest; there had been only rapture in the thought. He never said to himself that if anything happened to prevent his marriage with Mildred he should be unhappy for life—such an idea never came to him. He thought of Mildred with a sense of calm, deep affection and rest; marriage would be but an episode in his life—not life itself.

He was in no hurry for it—there was no longing of love, no counting the days and weeks, no sense of weary waiting. It was a very calm, well-regulated affection which he felt for Mildred—nothing more.

If it had been given to him to read the future he would never have gone to Mr. Barton's box at the opera that night, or never have made that fatal engagement with so lovely and fascinating a girl as Mignon Barton for the following afternoon, for since that hour he had never known one instant's peace of mind.

When he fell asleep at night, after long hours

of restless tossing on his pillow, a beautiful pink-and-white dimpled face crowned with fluffy golden hair, and a pair of bonnie blue eyes like wood violets steeped in dew, and a mouth like a rosebud was before his mental vision, and in his dreams his heart went out to her, and the first thought that flashed across his brain in his waking hours was of that self-same fair face, and there would always follow in his heart a mad wish that he might see her again ere another day dawned. And, like the moth of fable, of song, and of story, he fluttered around the flame until his wings were singed and he lay helpless at the feet of cruel destiny.

The betrothed of two young girls at one and the same time! Surely no man in the whole wide world was ever in such a position before!

Every other man had practised the wise rule to always be off with the old love before being on with the new.

At last Mildred shut the book of poems and looked up wistfully into his face, remarking,—

"'Lucille' does not interest you to-day, it seems. I wonder where your thoughts are, Gregor!"

"I was thinking of you and your future," he said, shortly; and there was no hesitating, tender love-glance in the eyes turned toward her.

"I am sorry to hear you say so," she responded, shyly, "for—for you looked as though your thoughts were anything but pleasant."

He started violently, and the words flashed quickly across his mind,—

"Full many an arrow by the archer sent  
Of hits a mark the archer little meant."

Ah! if Mildred could but have known his thoughts she would not have been sitting there before him with that smile on her lips.

"Do you know, Gregor," she said, looking up at him with a world of love in her dark, velvety eyes, "I delight to sit and watch you in your different moods! I am perfectly content to sit by your side for long hours, even though you

speak no word to me, your presence is so sweet to me."

He bowed his head on his hands and a deep groan broke from his white lips.

She was making it so hard to break away from her! He almost wished, in his despair, that he was dead.

"What if anything should ever happen to part us!" he said, turning to her slowly.

He was quite frightened at the change that came over her face. She turned as marble-white as she would ever be in her coffin.

"Nothing save death will ever part us," she answered, quickly; adding, in a low voice, thick with tears: "I think, Gregor, if you were to die, I should die too; I could never live in this cold, dark world if it did not hold you too, dear. I would cry out for death, that my soul might go and seek yours in heaven, where there is no parting. I should watch for your soul among the many; and, oh! Gregor, if there were countless millions there, I would know you and come to you, and say to you, if I could: 'This is indeed heaven, for you are here! The world was too cold and drear for me without you—love!'"

Gregor Thorpe rose quickly to his feet.

"I must go, Mildred," he said, in an unsteady voice.

"Why, it is very early in the evening yet—scarcely eight o'clock—and you always have stayed until nine, and sometimes until almost ten," remarked the girl, quite puzzled at his constrained manner.

"You will not find fault with me if I do not stay to-night," he said, despairingly. "To tell you the truth, Mildred, I am most wretched to-night. Let me go."

She came up to him and laid a little mite of a trembling hand on his arm.

"If you are troubled about anything why don't you confide your sorrows to me, Gregor?" she murmured. "I can sympathise with you better than anyone else in the whole world. Your sorrow would be mine, and, oh! it would

be so sweet a thought to me to think I could comfort you!"

He broke from the clasp of her hand. "In Heaven's name don't say any more, Mildred," he cried. "You are driving me mad!"

And without another word he turned and strode quickly down the path, dashed out of the gate and down the street.

Mildred gazed after him fairly rooted to the spot, dumfounded with amazement.

"What can be the matter?" she said to herself over and over again, tears filling her large, dark eyes.

For the first time since they had been betrothed he had parted from her thus.

Mildred leaned heavily back against the drooping bough of the apple tree, and cried,—

"A girl can forgive a lover for anything else than parting from her in coldness and indifference."

A great fear suddenly seized her. Would he ever love her less than he did in the hour he asked her to be his wife? Would he ever regret the vows he had uttered then? Was—oh, Heaven—was he beginning to tire of her?

"If I thought that, I—I should go mad!" muttered the girl, clutching her hands tightly together and pressing them over her heart.

At that moment she saw Mrs. Morris coming down the garden path.

"Are you alone, Mildred?" she asked.

The girl forced a smile to her lips.

"Yes, all alone," she answered. "Gregor has done some business to attend to, and went home early."

"I thought that was Gregor who just passed out of the gate," returned Mrs. Morris, "but I said to myself: 'Surely I must be mistaken; for having begged himself off the last time he was here, surely he wouldn't have the temerity to go so early this time.'"

"He had something important to attend to," faltered Mildred.

Mrs. Morris shook her head.

"You are too easy, Mildred. Depend upon it, a girl should not be so easy with her lover," she declared. "You ought to have made a little fuss over it the last time. You see, he has fallen into the habit with very little trouble now."

Mildred shook her head.

"Everything Gregor does should seem wise and pleasing to me," she retorted; quietly adding, "I think it would almost kill me to have any trouble with him. Why, it might part us, and then I would surely die."

"No woman ever yet died because she lost her lover in a good cause," remarked Mrs. Morris, emphatically. "More girls lose their lovers because they hold the reins too loose from the start. It takes considerable fascination to attract a man in the first place, a good deal of sympathy and maiden modesty to get him to propose, and then decided tact to keep up the force of attraction until the knot is tied."

"And after that?" murmured Mildred, blushing.

"Oh, you don't have to trouble yourself after the game has been bagged, as the old phrase goes. I am obliged to tell you all this, Mildred, because you are as innocent and ignorant of the ways of the world as a baby."

Mildred was glad when Mrs. Morris left her—glad to be alone to indulge in that greatest of all luxuries to a woman's heart—a good cry.

He had left her without saying good-night—left her without one backward glance—without touching her hand. Was his love growing cold? The thought terrified her.

She threw herself on her knees by the open window and raised her pure, sweet young face to the plying golden stars in the blue dome overhead.

"If he ever grows weary of me, in that hour let me die!" was the prayer that rose up from her heart.

But, like all trusting, loving-hearted girls she could find nothing to blame him for. She would have liked it if he had but made a confidante of her and told her why he was so downhearted.

That night Mildred's dreams were troubled,

and the next morning she awoke with a heavy heart.

"I think Gregor will be sure to come to-day," she told herself, with a little sigh.

But that day passed, the next, and also a third, but her lover came not, and Mildred could not shake off the horrible feeling that some terrible calamity had befallen him.

#### CHAPTER XXIV.

THERE is nothing more pitiful—more desolate under the sun than to watch and wait for a lover who cometh not. Every stroke of the clock finds responsive beats in the heart of her who watches and waits all in vain. The bitter sensation brings with it the keenest pain a woman's heart can ever know.

Mildred was in a pitiful dilemma, and she went at last to Mrs. Morris for advice.

"Shall I send for him?" she asked, sobbingly. "I do not know what I shall do—how I can live through it if another day passes and he does not come."

"Never send for a man—never, never, my dear!" exclaimed Mrs. Morris. "Never let him know he is so vitally essential to your happiness as all that. Men never thrive on that treatment. The whole case is simply this: if a young man cares for you, he will come to you—fight his way to your side if need be, though he has to pass through an army of men with drawn swords. If a man can be content to stay away from you, he is not in love with you, mark well my words; and your sending for him is an annoyance to him. He will find plenty of excuses to justify his remaining away."

"But what am I to do?" sobbed Mildred.

"What can you do? Simply nothing, but wait patiently and see how this affair terminates."

She pitied the girl, she had grown so thin and pale in three short days. But when a week passed and Mildred had heard no word of him, she too became a little uneasy.

"I must write a note to him or go in person to the hotel. Perhaps he is lying ill there. He might be dying, with no one near to lift a glass of water to his lips."

"You may be right; perhaps he is ill," assented Mrs. Morris. "We will call at the hotel this evening together."

Suiting the action to the word, they soon found themselves in the corridor of the hotel.

"Is Mr. Thorpe in?" inquired Mrs. Morris, as they were ushered into the grand reception-room by the liveried attendant.

"I will see in one moment, madame," was his polite reply; but it was some time ere he put in an appearance again.

In the meantime, Mildred had read almost everything in the society paper lying on the table—even the advertisements. Thus it happened that the blow fell suddenly and without warning on the girl, breaking a tender heart and crushing the sweetest and dearest love-dream that had ever brightened a desolate life.

Glancing aimlessly down one of the columns, her eye encountered the following among the personal bits of society gossip,—

"Cards are out announcing the coming marriage of Miss Mignon Barton, granddaughter of Mr. Barton, the banker, the charming young lady who made so brilliant a debut in society this season, to Mr. Gregor Thorpe, the well-known young mill-owner."

Only a few words, but they broke the truest heart that ever beat in a girl's bosom.

Mildred did not faint or utter any cry, but with a face from which all life, youth, and hope had been suddenly stricken, she turned to Mrs. Morris, but before she could utter the words on her lips the attendant entered the reception-room.

"Mr. Thorpe is not in, madame," he said. "He must be in soon. I think it would not be a bad idea to wait for him, seeing that we are here," Mrs. Morris remarked.

"I beg pardon for making so bold as to make any suggestion about the uselessness of waiting,

but I may as well tell you that Mr. Thorpe has gone to the opera to-night. I am sure of this, for they say that he sent a magnificent bouquet to Miss Barton, the banker's granddaughter, by one of our boys, with the verbal message that he would call for her sharp at eight with the carriage—that Madame Patti was to sing, and he believed she would be pleased with the programme for this evening."

The words fell sharp and unexpected upon Mrs. Morris.

With a gasp she turned a frightened face to Mildred, fearing the effect of them upon her.

The girl had risen suddenly to her feet, and stood beside the marble table, clutching it for support.

"Let us go," she said, in a voice that sounded scarcely human, it was so freighted with bitter anguish. "We have no right to remain here."

"Mildred," she cried, "in Heaven's name sit down a moment until you compose yourself! You are going to swoon. You are trembling like a leaf," she added, in anguish, as she forcibly took the little hand from the cold marble table.

"The room is stifling! Let us get out into the open air," murmured Mildred, piteously; and Mrs. Morris complied with this request at once.

The man looked after them wonderingly.

"That is one of the prettiest young ladies I have ever seen," he soliloquized. "And she seemed all broken up when she heard that Mr. Gregor Thorpe had gone to the opera with the great banker's granddaughter."

Meanwhile, Mrs. Morris was hurrying Mildred rapidly homeward through the crowded streets.

"Try to bear up bravely until we reach home, my dear," she whispered, holding the girl's arm closely.

Mildred made her no answer.

Contrary to her expectation, the girl did not give way to wild cries when they closed the door after them in her own home.

What words could she say to comfort her! The frozen look on the white face terrified her. She quite believed the girl was losing her reason.

"Mildred," she said, gently, "let me try to comfort you. Oh, my dear child, what words can I say!"

"You can say nothing that will mend a broken heart," murmured the girl, in a quivering voice. "There is no balm for it in this world. The greatest kindness you can do me would be to leave me to myself, to live or to die, as Heaven thinks best."

"Don't take the matter so much to heart, dear," returned Mrs. Morris. "Taking a young lady to the opera is not an unpardonable sin. Many a man does the same thing, but that does not worry his betrothed in the least. Remember you are soon to marry Gregor; and when he is once a husband, all this flirting will be over."

The dearest kind of a laugh broke from Mildred's lips—a laugh more pitiful to hear than a sob would have been.

"I am not to marry him now," she answered.

"Gregor is to marry the grand heiress, Miss Barton."

Mrs. Morris quite believed that the girl was losing her reason.

"Look!" said Mildred, pointing to an item in the paper which she had brought with her. "Read that, and tell me if I am mad or dreaming."

Slowly Mrs. Morris read it through; then she turned to Mildred eagerly.

"There must be some mistake," she declared. "This cannot be your Gregor."

"There is no mistake," returned the girl. "Didn't you hear the boy at the hotel tell me that he had taken this same Miss Barton to the opera?"

Mrs. Morris knew that Mildred was right, and that there had been no mistake made.

For the first time in her life she was at a loss for an answer. She went up to Mildred and kissed her death-cold face.

"What shall I say to you, dear! What shall I do for you, my poor child!" she murmured, compassionately.

"The greatest kindness you can do me is to



leave me by myself a little while," was the answer; and with tears falling from her eyes, Mrs. Morris slowly complied with this piteous request.

Left to herself, Mildred crept to the open window and raised her face to the dark, cold night sky.

"Oh, Heaven! oh, my angel mother looking down, who must see and know all my woes, why am I so sorely tried! Oh, why did he take his love from me! It was all I had in this life—my all, my star of hope! I could not live on in this cold, dark world without the sunshine of his love. The banker's granddaughter has so much, she could choose from many a lover. I have only Gregor. I could not live through the desolate days, months, and years to come if he were not by my side. Oh! tell me, listening angels and playing stars, how I shall face my life without him!"

But neither the listening angels nor the golden-hearted stars had any answer for her.

Long hours she knelt by that window, weeping as she had never wept in all her young life before; and Mrs. Morris did not disturb her, for well she knew there was no pain, no anguish so bitter in this world to a woman's heart as the first throes of sorrow that always accompany a broken love-dream.

To love—to give the deep, pure love of one's heart to one who has turned from you for another's charms, is an experience a thousand times worse than death. When a woman has passed through this affliction she has known what it is to drain the very dregs of life's bitterness; for

"Love is to man a thing apart;  
'Tis woman's whole existence."

It almost seemed to Mildred that she would wake up and find it but a dream. Her Gregor, whom she loved so well, about to marry another! Why, it was most absurd! Then the words on the paper would float above her mental vision in letters of fire.

Suddenly an idea like an inspiration came to her. She rose from her knees, clasping her hands piteously together.

"I will go to Mr. Barton's beautiful granddaughter to-morrow and tell her all my pitiful story," she sobbed, "and I will beg her on my knees not to take my lover from me. Surely Heaven will put it into her heart to hear my prayer! Yes, I will see her at once."

## CHAPTER XXV.

WITH Mildred, to think was to act; and late as the hour was, she put on her hat and jacket, and made her way to the palatial home of the great banker.

The servant who answered her summons looked with unforgotten amazement at the slender figure in the russet-brown dress standing shivering in the marble vestibule, and his astonishment was great when he found that her errand was to see Miss Mignon Barton, the banker's haughty granddaughter, at that hour of the evening.

He laughed impudently in her white face, as though it were quite a joke.

"See Miss Barton, indeed!" he cried. "Why, what put such a presumptuous idea as that into your little head, I wonder!"

Mildred did not heed the insolent tone.

"I have walked such a long distance, and my business is of such great importance to me, sir," she faltered, piteously.

"Important to you, no doubt, but less than nothing to the heiress, I fancy," he retorted, adding: "You may as well make up your mind to the fact that you will not be able to see her to-night. Call to-morrow morning—say, about two—then you will be most likely to see her."

Mildred turned to him with a wistful face and quivering lips.

"I have to work for my living; my time is not my own," she replied, huskily. "I could not get here before this hour unless I called very early in the morning, and I fear that would be quite as objectionable."

The servant nodded.

"You will have to state your business by letter or manage to get here somewhere about ten o'clock in the morning—that's about all I can say," he returned, decisively; and as he uttered the words he swung the heavy carved oaken door unceremoniously to in her face.

With a choking sob Mildred turned away and crept slowly down the steps like a wounded hare. She regained her home without being missed, and she cried herself to sleep, and for the first time in all her pure young life the prayer she tried to utter died away on her lips. It almost seemed to the poor girl that Heaven had forgotten her.

Mildred made up her mind to write to the haughty young heiress and beg her to appoint a time when she could see her. She would have no leisure to write during the busy hours of the day, but on the following evening her thoughts would be more composed.

It was a long, dreary day to her, despite the fact that her duties as cashier of the establishment gave her very few idle moments.

Suddenly an event happened which changed the whole course of the poor girl's life. One of the saleswomen handed her a cheque, requesting the balance over the amount of the bill in cash, asking Mildred to attend to it at the earliest moment possible, for the young lady customer was waiting rather impatiently.

"Ten pounds for a dozen pairs of white kid gloves seems a reckless waste of money," sighed the young saleswoman. "Ah, me! Mildred, what a great deal of good we could do among the poor and the starving with that much money!"

Mildred smiled faintly.

"The young lady's carriage gloves are quite as elaborate," the saleswoman went on. "Why, she is so extravagant she must have her initials in gold thread worked on them—'M. B.' If she had to work for her living she would know the value of money; but having her wealthy old grandfather, Mr. Barton, to pay the bills, she has no need to trouble her pretty head about anything so trifling as the cost of anything she may want."

Mildred dropped her pen on the instant those words fell on her ear, and turned a startled face to the girl.

"You say—Mr. Barton's granddaughter—is—in the place!" she gasped, in an almost dying voice.

"Yes, that is what I said," returned the saleslady, looking at her in wonder.

Mildred sprang to her feet, trembling with excitement.

"I must see her—I must have a few words with her!" she cried. "Please point her out to me."

The girl, who had not quite heard all of Mildred's incoherent remark, beckoned her to follow her.

"Almost all of the girls in the shop have asked that the pretty young heiress be pointed out to them," she said, laughingly; "but really, Mildred, I thought you were too sensible—and too dignified to give way to curiosity. Ah, there she is now!—the slim, graceful young girl in the grey faille silk dress. Her face is turned from us just now; she will look this way presently."

Mildred stopped short, drawing a quick, hard breath. Oh, how beautiful she was! how dainty, how lovable! No wonder she carried the hearts of all men by storm. She might choose whom she would. Why, then, did she choose a poor girl's lover—a poor girl's all!

Mildred leaned heavily against one of the iron pillars, her little hands pressed tightly over her heart, and watched her rival with her very soul in her gaze.

What was there so strangely familiar to her about the pose of that golden head, about every gesture, she wondered vaguely.

Mildred crept nearer to her; she must ask her for just one moment's conversation. She was so near her that she could have reached out her hand and touched her, when suddenly the heiress spoke.

"You can have the extra stitching done, and

send them up to me by eight this evening; that will be time enough."

That voice! Great Heaven! it shot through Mildred's heart like an electric shock, paralyzing for an instant every muscle, and in that instant the heiress turned her face slowly toward her.

A great cry broke from her lips.

"Am I mad—or dreaming!" she gasped, faintly. "It is—Paula, or—or my eyes deceive me! Paula risen from the dead!"

The heiress turned on her in a flash. Was it a quiver that ran through her veins, or only a haughty gesture of annoyance! Her eyes met Mildred's with a cold, steady glitter in them. People were gathering around them—she was like a stag driven to bay.

Her voice was clear and shrill over the babel of voices.

"You are mistaken in regard to my identity," she said. "I am Mignon Barton," and before Mildred could utter the retort that sprang to her lips, the heiress had turned deliberately on her heel and swept haughtily from the shop to her carriage which stood in waiting. No one knew how she sank back among the velvet cushions, trembling like an aspen-leaf.

"Mildred!" she muttered. "Great heavens! I thought I would faint dead away as I realized that it was she. I dared not recognise her. If I had, the whole terrible story would have come to light. I would be exposed before the whole world. I would be turned from my luxurious home out into the street. But all this weighs as nothing against the thought that I would lose the handsome lover who placed this glittering diamond on my finger only last night."

"No, no! I would as soon think of giving up life itself as giving up Gregor Thorpe's love! He never has associated the great banker's heiress with the poor little working-girl whose life he once saved, and of whose face he only caught fleeting glimpses through a veil."

"If I had thought Mildred would never have betrayed me, I would have searched for her, found her, and told her all; but I was wise when I weighed the matter, and said to myself that it would never, never do; for Mildred was such a Puritan, she would never countenance the glaring lie that I lead in playing the rôle that I now fill."

"Poor Mildred! how horror-struck she looked into my face when I so coolly denied my identity. It is better for both of us that I did not give in and fly into her arms; but all in an instant I remembered that that would mean the ruin of all my hopes, and I could never stand poverty again. I should die of shame if people even dreamed that a working-girl—a shop-girl in a kid-glove emporium—was my sister." And the beauty sunk back shivering among her cushions.

But all the way home the white, pitiful face of poor Mildred, who had been so true and noble a sister to her, haunted her, despite her efforts to banish it from her thoughts.

"Ah, well, never mind; I will make it up to Mildred when I come into possession of the Barton millions, and am safely married to the man I love; that is, if she is not too indignant to make up with me then."

In the flush of prosperity she forgot all that poor Mildred had been to her in the past.

It had always been on Mildred's shoulders that the heavy burden of their poverty had fallen.

It was Mildred who did all the housework in that humble tenement-house home, for it always grieved her beyond words to see Paula's dainty white hands engaged in any of the drudgery.

"You are the lady of the house, Paula, darling," she would say; and Paula was always more than willing to resign her task to good-natured, good-hearted Mildred.

And when the poor invalid mother was restless through the night with pain, it was always Mildred who arose, sitting up with her long hours, never complaining over the loss of sleep. And when the poor mother once in a while suggested that she was too tired to be up with her, that Paula should take her place, she would smile and say:

"We do not want our beautiful little Paula to lose her beauty sleep, mamma. It does not matter about me."

She would have given her life, and thought it no sacrifice, if it could have purchased Paula's happiness.

But in this hour the girl forgot what Mildred had done for her. Pride was stronger than sisterly love, and vanity and yearning for wealth and grandeur overpowered all other feelings.

Ah, yes! Mildred must be sacrificed if she stood between her and wealth and love.

## CHAPTER XXV.

No pen can portray the feelings of Mildred Garstin as her sister turned from her so coldly and swept haughtily from the shop. It almost seemed to her that her heart broke in that moment, and life died within her.

She stood there, where Paula had left her, like one paralysed.

Suddenly there was a light touch on her shoulder, and, looking up, she saw the manager of the emporium standing before her, with a very white and angry face.

"Will you step to the office, Miss Garstin!" he said, sternly; and Mildred mechanically complied. "Now, then," he began, harshly, as soon as the plate-glass door closed behind her, "what is the meaning, may I ask, of this most remarkable scene which I have just witnessed?"

Mildred burst into tears, and it was a moment ere she could control her voice sufficiently to speak.

"Pray do not be displeased with me, sir," she faltered. "The—the young girl to whom I spoke was my sister—whom a most remarkable accident—a strange fate—parted from me. I have searched for her for many a long week, and only succeeded in finding her to-day."

"I have heard of many strange affairs in the course of twenty years as manager of this place, but in all my experience I have never come across a parallel to that which I have witnessed to-day. I could almost doubt your sanity, Miss Garstin. The lady whom you claim as your sister declares herself to be a perfect stranger to you; and, moreover, she is well known; she is the granddaughter of a well-known man. How you could have made such an error is simply amazing to me, to say the least."

Mildred's lips moved, but no sound issued from them.

"What your object was I am at a loss to fathom," he went on, still more harshly. "One could almost doubt your sanity, Miss Garstin."

"I am sure it is my sister Paula," reiterated Mildred, faintly. "I could tell her from among the whole world of young girls."

The manager frowned darkly.

"You have lost us one of our best customers, and you have made a sensational scene in our place which may be in all the papers to-morrow, and you have brought down upon us, for being so unfortunate as not to be able to shield the young heiress from such an unexpected attack, the just anger of Mr. Barton, and, in weighing these things, I have come to a conclusion, Miss Garstin, and that is, that it is best for us to do without the services of a person who is liable to make such alarming mistakes. To be more explicit, we will consent to lose you, Miss Garstin. The last of the week, as you know, we make up our salary list, and a cheque for the amount of our indebtedness to you will be posted to your address. I have nothing further to say. Good-morning, Miss Garstin."

If a volcano had burst suddenly beneath her feet, or a thunderbolt fallen upon her from a clear sky, Mildred could not have been more astounded. She tried to speak, but words failed her. The world seemed to suddenly grow dark around her.

She turned and groped her way from the office like one suddenly stricken blind. She almost fainted that she was in a hideous dream, from which she must awaken presently.

Surely the sorrow which was so keen at her heart was enough without the awful calamity of realising that she was discharged being added to it.

She took down her hat and jacket, donning

them with ice-cold, trembling hands, and walked mechanically out of the place—out into the golden sunshine and the busy throng that surged to and fro on the street.

"What have I ever done in this life to deserve so heavy a cross!" she murmured, looking piteously up at the blue, cloudless sky. "I—I cannot bear much more!"

She drew her veil down tightly over her face, that the passers-by might not observe the tears that rolled down her cheeks.

Her path on her way home led through the lower end of the park.

She had never lingered there before, but to-day she dropped down on the nearest seat, and, as no one was nigh, gave way to her feelings and wept as she had never wept in all her young life before.

If she had only had Gregor—to console her in her great sorrow, how hard she would have striven to bear up under the cruel blows fate had showered thick and heavy upon her.

She was quite sure of Paula's identity; but why she was dressed in silks and gleaming jewels was a mystery to her, as well as the fact that they called Paula—her sister Paula—Mr. Barton's granddaughter.

But by all means the bitterest thought that came to her was the pitiful remembrance that they said it was Mr. Barton's granddaughter to whom Gregor was now betrothed. Oh, Heaven! could it be true? What had she done that fate should torture her so cruelly as that?

The sound of carriage wheels fell upon her ear, and she drew back, shrinking among the shadows of the foliage, waiting for the vehicle to pass.

The next moment a magnificent pair of horses drawing a victoria came slowly into sight.

The equipage would never have attracted Mildred's attention, but one glance at the two seated among the seal-brown plush cushions held her gaze spellbound. They were Paula and Gregor Thorpe!

A great gasp broke from her lips, and she felt the blood stand still and grow cold in her veins as she gazed.

There was no mistaking that perfect face of Paula's—yes, despite all the trappings of wealth, the shimmer of silks and the gleam of jewels, she knew that the girl whom they called Mr. Barton's granddaughter was surely lost Paula. But in the next instant her gaze had hurried from her sister to the handsome man at her side.

It made her grow sick and faint at heart to see the expression on his face as his gaze rested on Paula; there was no mistaking the love-light in his eyes. Ah! he had never looked at her with that rapt expression on his face—not even in the moment that he had asked her to be his wife!

The victoria and its occupants were so near Mildred that she could have put out her hand and touched her sister's garments. So near that the hoofs of the horses and the wheels threw a cloud of dust over her as they passed her by.

Bits of their conversation fell upon her strained ears, and she almost wished she had died rather than have lived to hear it.

"You will like the place I have purchased, dear," he was saying in a low voice; "and, oh, how sweet to me is the thought that it is to be our future home! It is in the hands of the furnishers, and I have given them *carte blanche* to arrange matters without a thought of expense. I want you to be pleased with our home."

Paula smiled up into his face, and, knowing the coachman would be none the wiser, and all heedless of the near presence of the little figure sitting on the bench, half-screened by the flowering vines, he bent his handsome head and kissed Paula, and the memory of that caress lived forever in Mildred's anguished heart.

The vehicle rolled on, and then, but not till then, did poor Mildred's fortitude give way.

"He is Paula's lover," she whispered, raising her face to the golden sunlight sky. "Surely that is the bitterest drop in my cup of woe."

And then without another word, a sigh, or a moan, she fell face downward in the long grass in a deep, death-like swoon.

It was by the merest chance that Mrs. Morris happened to come that way.

A cry of terror broke from her lips as she saw

the figure of a woman among the grasses, and on taking a few steps nearer discovered that it was Mildred.

In a moment she was kneeling beside her. At the first glance she quite believed the girl was dead, she was so very cold and white. A little cold water from an adjacent fountain soon brought her to.

"What in the world brought you here, Mildred!" questioned Mrs. Morris, anxiously. "How does it happen that you are not at your place of business?"

"I have just been discharged, Mrs. Morris," she sobbed.

Her friend looked at her as though she could not quite credit the evidence of her senses.

The words, "What in the world was the reason?" were on her lips, but she did not utter them. She knew Mildred's nature well enough to understand that the information must be vouchsafed voluntarily from the girl's own lips if at all.

"Yes, I have been discharged," murmured Mildred, commencing to sob bitterly.

"Come home, my poor child, and let me try to comfort you," she said, compassionately. "Your hands are as cold as ice, and you are trembling like a leaf. Do not take it to heart so. That is not the only place in the world, you know. I thought you were dead when I first came upon you."

"I wish to Heaven I had been!" cried Mildred, with a fresh burst of bitter sobs. "The world is cold and joyless. I only wish to die."

"Mildred, Mildred!" cried Mrs. Morris. "I can hardly believe it is you who has uttered such words, you have always borne trouble so bravely."

"But there are some troubles more cruel than death to bear," returned the girl, wearily.

(To be continued.)

## FOUND WANTING.

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### CHAPTER III.

PELHAM CLIFFORD did not see much of Delmar; when he did it was at the Elmhursts, where he took care not to be thrown much in his company. He would fain have monopolised Maddie, but was afraid, not quite sure how Delmar would take it. Clifford could not detect any jealous proprietorship of the girl—Albert seemed indifferent whether she was with him or other men; but he did not know how far it was well to go, and wisely kept on the safe side.

He was delighted when one morning Mr. Elmhurst, who also fished, arranged to go with him, and proposed that his niece, who could use a rod very well, should go too. It was safe, as her uncle was there; it was not his proposition, and if Albert objected he must see Clifford could not have got out of it.

Miss Maddie was in high feather. She rather belied her uncle's recommendation, for she certainly needed a good deal of assistance, and it is to be feared not much fish was caught by either of the young people that morning. Clifford, it must be said, enjoyed it all the more, because it had to him something the flavour of a stolen pleasure, possessing also the still greater merit of very likely annoying his whilom rival.

It fell rather flat, therefore, when after a long day's fishing and an *al fresco* high tea—all without the obnoxious lover—in walked that gentleman, with the remark, as he shook hands all round,—

"So you've had a jolly day on the river? Well, Maddie, was yours the biggest basket?"

Maddie clapped her hands joyously.

"Oh! I caught—" her face fell, and she gave a side glance of comical distress at Pelham. "None at all," said her uncle. "Why didn't you join us, Albert?"

"Did you know we were going?" asked Maddie.

"Yes, I told him, puss; and he said perhaps he'd give us a look up, but he didn't."



"What the deuce did the stupid old fellow tell him for!" thought Clifford, angrily.

They kept early hours here. Clifford went first—he generally did, to avoid walking with Delmar as far as the latter's house—and Albert, coming in a little later from a ramble in the garden with Maddie, almost immediately took leave. Maddie, when her uncle had taken his candle, made no movement to follow his example, and her aunt noticed she looked disturbed.

"Maddie, are you going to bed to-night?" said Mrs. Elmhurst. "What is the matter, my dear?"

"I am thinking, auntie."

"I see that. But if you do all your thinking at night where will your roses be? Is it very important?"

"Auntie," said the girl, getting up and fidgeting with some knick-knacks on the table, "I want to make up my mind."

Auntie, though sleepy and wishing to retire, put in no word, but waited with a martyr's heroism.

"Why can't we go on as we are?" said Maddie, irrelevantly. "I am sure it's very nice; and I'm as happy as a king, or a queen I suppose I should say. I don't want to be married."

"Then why did you engage yourself, my love?" said auntie, smiling.

"Oh, auntie! But August—when he comes back—I can't!"

She was a spoiled child, so auntie did not say a word in opposition, though she thought of a great many. Besides, she had a dread of parting with the girl, and was ready to lay hold of any chance of delay. Maddie moved about restlessly, knocking over a light chair, and picked it up with an "Oh, bother!"

"Poor Albert is out of favour to-night!" ventured Mrs. Elmhurst. "Why do you want to wait, my dear? There is really no reason why you should."

"That's the horrid part. That's just what he said, and I had nothing to answer," said the young lady, with an aggrieved air. "I told him I'd think about it."

"He's really very reasonable," said the elder lady, "there would just be nice time for your trousseau."

"On, auntie!" cried the girl, laughing, "he never thought of that—fancy him! I believe he'd open his eyes, and say he'd forgotten there were such things as trousseaux. It's just because—" she stopped, as she recollected the reasons Delmar had given, and the manner of their urging. She recalled it all, as she brushed out her long brown hair, smiling to herself. She was to be queen of the old house where so many fair Delmars had reigned, and shrewd Maddie shook her head a little.—"Queen—I don't know. I am a little bit afraid of him now." Yet it was not that which made her reluctant to give the promise there was no reason for withholding. She had made so many pleas; she was so young, she wasn't steady enough, she didn't know enough; all of which Delmar had combated with—for him—wonderful patience. "He can't be trifled with, I know," said Maddie, in the most perplexed state of mind she had ever experienced. "Oh, dear, why couldn't he be less alone—just when I am having such fun? As if I wanted to be married!"

Delmar was disappointed and a little vexed. He had not expected to find Maddie so unreasonable, and if it was feminine coyness he thought it misplaced.

But all sore feeling vanished at the next sight of the girl's winsome face; he left her without having again touched on the subject, but with an unaccountable heart-sinking at the prospect of leaving her.

True, it was the first time he had been away from her for long, and he settled that as the cause of his self-called stupidity.

Not much was seen of Clifford; he had become acquainted with the rector's family, and was not infrequently there; and Maddie was rather cross when she heard of one or two tennis-parties, to which she had not been invited. She curled her lips scornfully.

"Just like those girls!" said she, with withering femininity.

But only her aunt heard her.

As the time for departure drew nearer and nearer—and oh! if time would sometimes have a little mercy and work half time—Delmar turned over a hundred ways of putting off his going. Couldn't he do it this way, that way, any way but the one he knew to be inevitable? And, besides, he wanted to take Maddie there for their wedding trip, and he knew he would have to set things to rights to make it fit for her.

He was a great deal with her these last few days, riding, walking, boating principally. Maddie used an oar very prettily, and many an hour they floated over the river and up the silent backwaters, where few others intruded. From time immemorial lovers have been an exclusive race.

Their last day came at length. Such a perfect day—cloudless, windless. What would they do with it? asked Mrs. Elmhurst—Maddie was low spirited, and to various suggestions refused either assent or dissent. She stood at the window watching.

"She would wait till Albert came," she said, and just then his light step crossed the grass; he was alone, and the girl's face fell ever so little. But it brightened as he ran to the door, standing wide open, and kissed her, holding her longer than usual.

"Boating!" she said, touching the soft, white flannel.

"I thought you'd find it too hot for riding, and we could have a long afternoon on the river, if you like. I'll show you how to do your feathering better, and you can practise it while I'm away," said Delmar, smiling at her; she looked so pretty, with just the lightest touch of pensiveness. "Run and dress, and don't be more than half-an-hour."

"Impudent!" said she, laughing, and vanished.

They got off in reasonable time, however, and Maddie's lessons began. Great fun it was. The girl was in an idle humour, and she made mistakes which had to be corrected, then laughed at herself and at him, and was so wittingly incorrigible that Delmar had no particular desire that she should be a very apt pupil. Then she insisted on rowing without any coaching at all, and didn't do badly by any means; while Delmar lay in the boat, with his cap off, and his hands under his head, and watched her from under his heavy lashes.

Some days—often it is only hours, or even minutes—leave an indelible impress, which, like childish memories, last us all our lives. To Delmar this was one of those days, and he knew it then, though he could not have analysed why it was. Afterwards, when he could stand upright, after the blow which had nearly staggered him, he understood it all. To-day—this day of glowing light and beauty—he only felt; to-day he was softened by the pain that lay in his heart; regret, restlessness, struggle, were charmed away, or only served to soften still more deeply. There seemed before him all manner of possibilities with this slight girl at his side.

It was a rift in the cloud of his life, and all the sunlight passed through—a sweeping back of the mists, and before him lay the shining hills.

Maddie began to sing—they were almost alone on the river—in her high sweet treble, the voice of an undisturbed, serene soul. But what did he want with passionate strivings! He was weary of that. She was not rowing now, and the boat lay still on the placid water—nay, the leaf of a water-lily scarcely drifted.

"Albert," said she, breaking off the song abruptly. "It's getting late and time we were home. Come and take the oars."

"Not yet, Lina," pleaded Delmar, "it's not six yet. You've awakened me out of a dream that can never come back."

Was there a truth in the half-jeating words? "Have I! You look lazy enough for any amount of dreams," said Maddie, merrily. "I'm coming over there and you'll come here." She stepped across, and sat down in the stern, but Delmar did not rise.

"Maddie," he said, looking up at her, "have you thought about what I asked you the other day?"

"Dear me, no! What time has there been for thinking, between you and your friend?"

"What, Clifford? He isn't my friend."

"Don't you like him? Well, never mind, you and he, or one of you, were always proposing something to be done, and then there's tennis and music."

The shade on the fair face, not vexed, but pained, did not escape her. Her feelings were quick, if neither deep nor lasting, and easily touched. Before she could speak Delmar said quietly,—

"True, there has been no time, let it rest then," exchanging in those words assurance for anxious expectancy; for no girl had dreamed more of a home than he had, perhaps because when a home had been his he had valued it cheaply.

"No, no!" exclaimed Maddie, impulsively, checking him as he moved to get up, "stay, Albert; I won't think about it at all, I will say yes now."

Delmar started up with a flash of joy in his blue eyes, and grasped both her hands for a minute before he could speak. Maddie half shrank from him; his vehemence always perplexed her calmer nature; she did not know how to respond to it. She was relieved when, after a second's hesitation, as if he wanted to say something, but hardly knew what, he sat down by her.

"Maddie, darling," he said, quite gently. "I ought to thank you—I don't know how. My thanks must come later when I can do something. But you are sure you are not promising only to please me?"

"Yes, sure—why?"

"You are so quiet."

"No," said she, laughing, "it is you who are so desperate over everything. I don't show gladness like you do."

"I know I am too vehement," he said, with unexpected humility—he was too happy to be proud—"but it isn't the same to you, Lina. I've had no home for years—I know it's my own fault that I couldn't get on with my father, but that doesn't make it better, and just now I had made up my mind I must wait longer, so you see it's no wonder, if I feel it more than you. Indeed, darling, you will have to leave a great deal for me—I receive everything."

She only gave him a quick, pleased look, and shook her head a little. He did not seem to miss anything in her manner after her assurance of willingness, according to her profound belief because she said it. He talked about what he was going to do for her at Stratharlie and Danceswood; and under the spell of the sweet voice, and the loving thought of herself in every plan and word, the girl's vague want of perfect satisfaction melted away. Why, she would be a little queen, first in everything, made much of, and deferred to.

Her heart grew more tender, but did it send out one strong throb of love to answer to his? She had at best only a dim idea of how much she was loved; but he was satisfied with her smiling acquiescence. His own largeness of nature covered the smallness of hers. Only one complaint he made. "August" was so vague.

"I will write and tell you exactly!" said Maddie, colouring and smiling. With that he was content, and leaving her side took up the sculls and rowed leisurely homewards. Parting would be nothing now! However, that was easy to say when the said parting was hours off. When the last moment actually came he did not actually think it "nothing."

Clifford had been in, and there had been music and talking, but as the time drew near Maddie stole away downstairs, and, of course, Delmar followed her. She was standing at the window in the moonlight—there was no other light in the room—and the young man took her silently in his arms. They stood so some minutes, without speaking, till Maddie stirred a little.

"I wish you weren't going!" she said, just ready to cry at a word.

"So do I, with all my heart, dearest; but it is only a few weeks; four or five, and you will write often, Lina, won't you? I shall be all alone

up there, and your letters will be next best to yourself."

"You will write often, too!" whispered Maddie.

"Of course I will! Look up, sweetheart, and say good-bye—the time is running on. And you'll come to the gate with me, Lina, as you always do. Don't miss it this last time."

She looked up when he told her. Her eyes were wet though she had not been crying. He, in a keener pain than she felt, for all her tears, said no good-bye in words at first; but the minutes slipped by while he held her locked to the heart that beat so wildly—here was calm and measured. Again and again he kissed her, drinking his fill of the sweetness in her eyes.

"Good-bye, my treasure, my life!" he said, as he released her; "think of me—wait for my coming—watch for me—you will love me always."

She sobbed "yes—always;" and in utter faith he kissed again the lips that had promised an eternity of love.

He and Clifford left together, and Maddie went with them to the gate. She was bright and smiling as she took and gave the last greetings. A little way they had gone when Delmar involuntarily paused and looked back. She was still standing there, a flood of moonlight glorifying her, waving her hand as she saw him turn. He waved his back and then the girl vanished from the gate, and Delmar overtook his companion, asking him if he was going to stay!

Clifford looked sharply, but covertly, into his face. Was he jealous and uneasy? He could not be sure, and chose the wiser if meaner part. "I think not," said he, carelessly. "I don't suppose I shall be long before I follow your example."

Delmar expressed neither pleasure nor regret; indeed, as he went on alone to his own house, Clifford and his doings went completely out of his head. He was thinking of Maddie, and making an omen of the light that surrounded her like an aureole, as she stood at the gate.

#### CHAPTER IV.

THE next night's Flying Scotchman bore Albert Delmar to his mother's Highland home, and saw Mr. Pelham Clifford bending over pretty little Maddie at the piano.

He felt bound to call this evening. She must miss her lover; and he was full of charity, remembering, no doubt, the apostle's injunction to visit the afflicted.

Maddie was lively, and in her usual happy spirits. She put on a pretty sentimental air when Mrs. Elmhurst sympathetically considered Albert's long, lonely journey, and said, "Poor fellow!" but that was all.

Clifford lingered in the village. He had comfortable quarters, he said, and had made pleasant friends—his sister was still abroad, his time his own—why should he go? His circle of acquaintance extended; the Elmhursts introduced him far and near.

"A young man fresh from London is a great acquisition in a quiet place like this," said Mrs. Elmhurst to her husband; "and I think he keeps dear Maddie from being low-spirited—he is so very entertaining!"

Mr. Elmhurst opened his eyes a little. Maddie low-spirited! But he was a discreet man, and through a long married life had received an excellent training, so he held his tongue.

Maddie had lately rather neglected her rod. Delmar was no disciple of Isaac Walton, and, as was the case in everything, she had followed his lead.

As soon as his immediate influence was removed, however, she became an enthusiast in the gentle art, so many a sunny morning saw Maddie and Pelham seated in the punt close to the weir. Maddie liked that best. Propriety was supplied by Mr. Elmhurst.

"If you young people want to go on fishing," said he, one day, when the *al fresco* lunch was over—they had had it on the grass near the lock-gates—"you can go back to the punt by

yourself, and I'll join you when I have had my siesta."

Maddie jumped up.

"You would like to go!" asked Clifford, smiling at her childish delight. She nodded and danced away over the grass.

"You heard from Delmar this morning didn't you?" asked Clifford, when they were established in the punt and he was attending to her line.

"How does he like his quarters?"

It had been Maddie's first long letter that had come that morning, and she had been very proud of its possession. Now she laughed and coloured.

"He doesn't like being up there," she said; and Clifford, glancing at her, her eyes dropped, while the colour deepened.

The man's heart beat a little faster. He answered, with a scarcely perceptible sigh,—

"I am not surprised!" Then a pause. "Now your line is ready," he said.

The girl took it, and her hand trembled as she did so. She dropped her line in the water, and was silent.

"It's a pity we can't stand still at some periods of our life," said Clifford, at last.

"What do you mean?" asked Maddie, not quick to jump at such meaning as lay under his words.

"I was thinking of our college days, how happy we were—no cares, no disappointments—"

"Well, but you haven't any now, have you?" said Maddie, laughing incredulously. "It's not so very long ago!"

"I wish trouble were never longer than time, Miss Montagu."

He looked so grave that Maddie became grave also.

"Are you speaking seriously?" said she.

"Now I have infected you with my own melancholy mood," said Pelham, self-reproachfully; "and you are such a bright being, and should be so happy, that it seems a sin to talk so to you! But there are times when one's mood impels one to speak."

Maddie's look at him was dangerously soft. She thought of the letter lying in her pocket, with so few of the ordinary love expressions in it, yet breathing such ardent love.

He had watched for her letter, he said—he had been so glad to get it. He was trying to arrange everything as she would like it. He was not disappointed, then! and an indefinite feeling of resentment accompanied this decision.

"I am so sorry," she said, in low plying tones.

"Sorry! for me! Ah, how good you are, and how vile I feel myself. Don't waste your kindness on me, but think of one who needs it more," said Clifford, with an apparent effort to speak lightly.

"Who—Albert!" said the girl, almost sharply. "He doesn't write as if he were unhappy."

"Why should he! Think what happiness lies before him—"

Maddie jerked her line out of the water with an impatient exclamation.

"It's his turn to be happy," Clifford went on musingly. "I am afraid—"

"Wasn't he happy at Oxford?" interrupted Maddie, or rather taking him up as he paused.

"I know he wasn't on good terms with his father—he said so himself. Was that his fault? Do you know what auntie said once—I don't know where she heard it—that he'd been so wild at college, that that was what made the quarrel. Is it true?"

"Ah, Miss Montagu, is that fair?"

"It won't make any difference," said Maddie; "auntie doesn't like it, but I don't mind—at least, I don't think I should. Besides, if he was so wild, how came he to take such high honours? He did, didn't he?"

"Very, indeed!" answered Clifford, feeling savage, and speaking admiringly. "He was a tremendous quick worker. I suppose that was how he got time for so much cricket and boating—and—and—" he picked himself up—"driving and billiards."

She gave him a half searching, half doubtful look.

"Was he a favourite?" said she.

"Well—a favourite, you say! Yes, I think so."

"How doubtful!" said Maddie, mockingly. "You and he were a great deal together, so you must know."

"We were in the same set—yes, I think he was generally liked. Of course his intellectual qualities made him an acquisition. He used to write a great deal for the *Undergraduate Journal*."

"I know. I've seen some of his things, only I can't understand them all. Then he wasn't much liked?"

"Oh, pray don't think that. Everyone liked to get him to the breakfasts and so on, and he knew a lot of the best people in Oxford; his musical talents would have got him an *entree*. Did you ever hear him speak of a family called Meredith? He was often there—used to sing with one of the daughters. They attended the cathedral, and some of us went there just to see them—"

"Who—the whole family?"

"No—no"—laughing—"the daughters, or, I should say, one of them. I don't recollect that they were both handsome."

"Oh!" another jerk of the line; then, "So you went to church to look at Miss Meredith. I've heard of them, but I never heard she was so pretty." She paused, then asked, carelessly,—

"Was it she sang, or the other one?"

"I am not quite sure, I think it was the pretty one; but Delmar can tell you."

"Oh, it doesn't matter," said Maddie, with a movement of the head, so slight as to be scarcely a toss, and yet it had all the expression of one.

She fished diligently for some time, and so did Pelham Clifford, but his thoughts were certainly not absorbed in his occupation. Maddie's went a will-o'-the-wisp dance from Strathville to Knights Millwood and back again to Christ Church Cathedral, and a pretty worshipper and a golden-haired undergrad, with adoring eyes! then—and they lingered here—to a wonder what the disappointment was Clifford had spoken of!

She became pensive; and in that humour she was as attractive as when sprightly. She sang when they went home, everything he asked for; and now and then he caught her gaze fixed on him with unconscious wistfulness. She had read Delmar's letter once that day, and she went to bed without looking at it again. But he had read his a dozen times.

With Mrs. Elmhurst Clifford was a greater favourite than ever Albert had been. She knew the latter had been wild at college, quarrelled with his father on that score, and cost his mother, who had died some years previously, many an anxious hour.

This had been told her by people of the neighbourhood, who knew the facts before ever she herself came to Knights Millwood.

It was true the father had been somewhat too strict, and that Albert had been with his mother all through her illness and devoted to her; it was true that though too late to receive his father's forgiveness in person it had been given; but none of these facts palliated Albert's misdoings.

What guarantee, she would say, had they that he was so very much better now! And he was hardly the sort of man to whom she liked to trust Maddie.

Even his love for the girl she only half knew, since he never showed it save to Maddie herself.

She was not blind as to the possible consequences of this intimate association with Pelham Clifford, but she was not displeased at the prospect. Still, she thought it right to remonstrate with Maddie when she saw her lax in writing to her lover.

"You know, my dear," she said, "he is not like some men—you can't twist him round your finger, nor make him take just what you like."

"He's a great deal more time for writing than I have!" said Maddie, petulantly. "What is there to say here! and I've been out so much."

"He would not like those excuses," said the aunt.

"Oh, he must be thankful for small mercies," said Maddie. "I think you mistake him, auntie. I will say for him he's very good, and would



make allowances for me. He'd believe everything I said—he always does."

"What—Albert?"

"Yes—Albert. Auntie, who told you about his being so wild at college? I think Mr. Clifford thinks it was true."

"It is true. Albert was a handful, I can tell you."

"But he was younger then—that was long ago."

Auntie would say nothing, but pursed her lips.

"You don't think," said the girl, uneasily, "that he is no different now? Why do you look so?"

"My dear, don't look too closely. No doubt you can manage him when you are married; and that reminds me, you really should settle the date—I don't know what to be at!"

"Manage him!" said Maddle. "I am sure I can't. I am half afraid of him, and yet he is good to me. Poor fellow, I have neglected him, but I'll write him a line—only I can't settle anything yet."

Off she ran, scribbled a scant line, and told the servant to post it, while she went to dress for a dance at a friend's. Clifford was there, and Maddle resigned him her programme.

"Three!" said she, as he gave it back. "Oh, not so many."

"Don't be cruel," whispered Clifford, bending his dark face close to hers; "think how soon this happy time will be over."

The girl looked at him startled, flushed up, and dared not say a word as he led her amongst the waiters.

Her heart was in a flutter, and the man at her side knew it.

A gleam of joy came into his face as that tell-tale colour and faltering step revealed to him his power.

So then there was not much adamant in this winsome fairy—a creature born for the smooth places.

Better so. He was one of the men who love a wife to be a pretty plaything, to charm their leisure hours—not a woman with a firm soul, who can stand at their side under fire.

It was quite a homely affair, this dance; no one came or went in carriages, as they all lived so near; so when the time came to leave, everybody went to put on wraps and thicker shoes, and so equipped went home.

Mr. and Mrs. Elmhurst went soberly, as became elderly married people, along the moonlit lanes, at a pace slow enough to suit the two who lingered behind.

Maddle was shy of her companion—she had not yet forgotten the earnest words and still more earnest look of a few hours ago.

"I like this lane—it's so pretty!" said she, just as they were going.

"I shall like it also—from this hour," answered Clifford. "You are hurrying—do you want to rejoin Mrs. Elmhurst?"

"No—not exactly."

"But you want to deprive me of a rare pleasure—a pleasure that will never be repeated," said Clifford, watching the face that flushed beneath his eyes.

It was a test—a turning point if Maddle had known it; a moment when she might have proudly rebuffed the tone, and the look that insulted Albert Delmar's betrothed, or have acknowledged that other men would be allowed the privileges only her lover should claim. But Maddle was Maddle—to whom the absent in body were absent in spirit—who lived in the present, and loved notice and admiration, and whose foolish little heart went out more to this man, nearer her own level, than ever it had to Delmar.

"Never!" she faltered.

"Is it not true?" said Clifford, hurriedly, bending down to her till she felt his breath on her cheek. "A month—a few weeks—will place us far apart; our lives will never again be as tonight. I said I should like this beautiful lane. No; I shall hate it!"

The man spoke passionately—as he felt. He was a traitor—true, but he loved Maddle. She looked surprised, startled at his energy.

"Hate it?" she said, innocently. "Why?"

"Can you ask me—you? Nay, do not ask it; I cannot tell you. Who ever loves the place where he has parted from—"

"Maddle!" called Mrs. Elmhurst through the darkness, "we are nearly home—come on, my love!"

The girl started forward.

"Don't speak like that," she said, quickly and beseechingly. There were tears in her eyes—those tears so ready for all but the deeper griefs; "don't make me—"

She was quickening her steps with a confused pause. Clifford laid his hand on her arm tightly.

"Maddle," he said, hoarsely, "stay, finish your words. What am I not to make you? What is in my power?"

"Nothing—never mind. Auntie is calling, let me go," exclaimed Maddle; "don't stop me, Mr. Clifford."

She ran on, past her aunt, straight in at the gate and up to her room, flinging off her hat, and herself breathlessly into a chair. He had called her "Maddle,"—he had said these happy days were over—he was unhappy, for her sake; did he love her?

Albert's very memory was swept away, while her soul was absorbed in this, to her, supreme question. She would have had no doubt if she had seen Clifford, as he passed Daneswood, standing solitary with lightless windows.

"She is mine!" he whispers to himself, with a triumph and joy that make his blood tingle! "fool to trust her, fool to leave her. You have passed me, and fooled me, Albert Delmar, in all things but love. At last I am conqueror. And the prize is worth the treason! Maddle, my own Maddle!"

And then he starts and grows pale at a new thought that strikes him like steel.

"What will Christine say?"

## CHAPTER V.

CHRISTINE, the dearly-loved sister, whose high soul would have scorned the mere thought of such deadly breach of faith, and lost its perfect belief in the man to whom the thought came! Christine, whom Pelham loved more truly—more nobly, than bewitching Maddle, of whose reproach he stood in fear—whose trust he dreaded to lose—what would she say if she knew?

Through a long, hot, restless night this fear kept recurring. He pictured the look in the great grey eyes when she heard that he had won another man's betrothed wife—that he had made chaos of another man's life to give peace to his own!

He tossed from side to side, writhing at the vision called up. She seemed to him standing there in the moonlight, such scorn in the slender shape—such sorrowful pity on the pale young face.

Turn as he would he saw her, as if the pure, upright soul struggled invisibly with his. But the prize to be given up—the love of his life—for intangible faith! His heart cried out wildly. He loved her! How could he yield her? She loved him! How could he see her suffer as wife to a man she had never loved? You have tempted her, a weaker soul than yours, the invisible soul answered. You have lured her away; she loves you, but the love was taught by you! A man to so foully wrong his fellow-man—the bearer of an old name to lower it so irretrievably. Give up life; give up love for honour and truth!

"I cannot!" cried Clifford, aloud, starting up. "Thank Heaven the day has come! Was Christine there in that ghastly moonlight?"

He shuddered from head to foot. Then he began to dress hastily. Christine must never know the truth; there must be this lifelong secret between them—this barrier always in sight.

Be it so. It need make no difference in their love, he argued, passion shivering to atoms the power of the earlier love.

What did he owe to Albert Delmar, besides,

that he should destroy his own happiness to preserve his? Had he not always been his rival? And he had gone too far now to draw back. Last night he had almost told Maddle he loved her; she must know it. His honour was pledged.

But that word made him change colour though he was alone. Honour for him lay in a groove—such honour as remained to him. So ready to fall back on a plea he would have none of. Honour! how, in pleading its excuse he trailed it deep in the dust! Honour to a woman and none to a man! And he called that love which could sear the soul of the woman he loved.

By the time he was dressed he had argued himself into the belief that he owed it to Maddle not to draw back. Christine herself must think so.

"She will never know, though," he said, hastily, and went down to breakfast.

Maddle, too, had not been free from compunction. She had slept the night through however; but a pang crossed her as on her plate at breakfast she saw the well-known handwriting and the Scottish postmark.

She frowned and would not open the letter at once. She spoke very little—she, usually a chatterbox! She thought of Strathairie and that old-fashioned, old-world Daneswood. How gloomy they would be! She wished she had asked him about that Miss Meredith. She dared say there was someone to flirt with at Strathairie. What a pity he had been so wild!

Then she read her letter languidly, with neither smile nor sparkle.

It was characteristic of Delmar that not a word was said as to her promise to fix the date of their marriage. She had said she would write, and she would without any need for urging.

Some slight complaint there was as to the brevity of her letters, but you could have fancied him smiling while he made it. So there seemed nothing to make the girl look vexed.

Mrs. Elmhurst watched her quietly. She saw how restless she was, but she went about her own duties and left the unstable soul to toss as it might.

That day passed, however, without Clifford making his appearance. Perhaps there was some design in this. After what he had said the girl would expect him—miss him—then fancy he had left for good, and torment herself. All of which Maddle did. The breathing time which a stronger heart would have laid hold of, to know itself and regain the lost position, Maddle occupied in fretful conjectures as to the sort of life Albert really led; in disloyal dwelling on his hundred faults; in feeble wonderings whether she really loved him!

Not once did she ask if he loved her, perhaps because the question would have seemed superfluous; not once did she think of the matchless faith he held in her, of the just claim he had on her to think a little of his happiness! Further and further he went from her thoughts and heart, and the gap was filled up with the image of Pelham Clifford.

She was pale, and listless, and anxious by the third day; so that when, wandering in the garden, she heard a click on the latch and looking up saw Clifford enter the garden, the change in her was marvellous. The blood rushed over her face, her lips half opened, her eyes all aglow. Had Albert ever received such greeting as this!

Clifford clasped her hands closely, a sort of fierce joy in the pressure of his fingers.

"You are glad to see me!" he asked, softly.

"Oh! why did you stay away!" the girl whispered, glancing up, half reproachfully.

Was there need of any explanation? Had she not surrendered the whole position in those words, so sweet to one, so cruel to the other! Into that very path where Albert Delmar had won her confession of love, had afterwards vowed his unalterable trust in her, this new lover led her. She wavered then, and would have hung back.

But the strong hand drew her on. Always led, always leaning, she made no further resistance, and Albert's impassioned pleading was

forgotten, as the avowal of a love that seemed to her as burning, fell on her ear.

"After what I said," Clifford began, still keeping his hold of her, "I have no right to hold back. You may blame me, call me false, a traitor! I cannot help it! I loved you from the minute I first saw you. Love such as mine knows, can brook no other demands, it sweeps all before it. So that you give me your love I am powerless to resist my own, and powerless to listen to any other plea. Reproach me if you will, Maddie—do all but say your heart is given away—that I am too late—that the souls that were meant for each other must be parted by a cruel promise; that I must stand by and see your life flung away on a man you have ceased to love—who will not value it as I do—"

"But Albert," said the girl, struggling with her sobs, "he trusts me—oh! what will he say! And he loves me!"

"Loves you!" repeated Clifford, passing one arm round the yielding form—"perhaps; but do you love him or me?"

He was tempting her so, and her own heart was tempting her too. Had she ever loved Albert!—had she felt when he asked that question as she felt now! Was it true that a mistaken promise should not part two kindred souls! Closer she felt his arm drawn round her, and she flung down and trampled on the souls of the two men who loved her.

"You!" she whispered, and heard no echo of another voice in the deep, glad tones of this, felt no pressure of other lips as these met hers in the kiss that should have bilstered them. She was happy as the Maddies of this world can be; they have no unsatisfied needs, and they see not the hands stretched out in direct need. Her heart was filled, no matter whose hungered. She was like the bright bird who lives in the sun; there are no shadows for him.

"You will never reproach me?" were Clifford's first coherent words.

"Reproach you!"

"Ah, Maddie! after all, only such love as mine can excuse me—only such as yours pardon me."

"Albert, you mean!" she said, under her breath. "But if I do not love him—"

"There it is, dearest. Your lives—both of them—would be flung away. Now, you find your true life; and he, surely, if he really loves you, would not seek to hold you to a promise you no longer wish to keep!"

"No—no—I daresay not," said Maddie, but trembled. It was very sweet all this—to love and be loved; but the ugly part that remained to be done—that only she could do!

"I am so afraid of him!" she said, clinging to this new protector.

"But listen, dear; what can he, what will he wish to do! If he has any honour he will not try to claim a reluctant bride. *Omnis vincit amor*, Maddie; and the hearts that were meant for each other must meet; they cannot be parted by an alien tie. I grant he may, perhaps, consider I have wronged him. Well, I can give the best, the irresistible reason—yourself. Who could know you, and not yield to your life—and all things!"

"Save honour!" flashed into his mind, as if the Christine of last night had said it. No such answer would ever come from these lips that smiled at him.

"You had mistaken yourself!" said Clifford; "a common enough error, but not always retrievable as it happily is now. He will see it in time; he will be glad for you to be happy. You would never have been happy with him!"

"Oh! no," said Maddie, shuddering.

"And I have the prior claim—the supreme claim of love—so we do him no wrong. Put away all fear, my Maddie!"

"I have!" said the girl, and she looked it—cloudless was her face. "I am sorry for him, or was; but it is for the best, isn't it! It is kinder to him, you are quite sure?"

"Quite sure!"

"And you would not say so if you were not!" said she, confidently. "It was a mistake. I don't think I ever loved him as—"

"Finish it, Maddie!" said Clifford, half-laugh-

ing as she turned her head aside. The next instant her brown eyes met his, with a look which saved the need of words. They paced up and down the long walk, talking mostly. It is another sort of love than theirs that not only needs silence, but speaks then more fully. It was lovers' talk, of course, with nothing in its outskirts would care to hear, but a great deal to them. Maddie, too, asked questions about her future sister-in-law, of whom she had already heard; and Clifford, while satisfying her curiosity, did not think it yet necessary to tell her that Christine must never know of that broken engagement.

That evening Maddie told her aunt of what had passed. Mrs. Elmhurst listened to her with a mixture of feelings. It was terribly awkward, and yet she was relieved. What would Knights Millwood say! but she immediately recalled that Maddie's engagement was not known save to some relatives at a distance. What, worst of all, what would Albert Delmar say!

Maddie knelt down before her.

"Auntie!" said she, "are you angry!" "Angry with you, my dearest child!" said Mrs. Elmhurst, kissing her fondly; "not the least. I never quite liked that engagement—I may say now—nor Albert himself. I don't think he is all he ought to be. And you were not suited for each other. No! I like this better. But what will Albert say! I cannot bear to face it!"

"Oh! auntie, don't desert me! I can't marry him if I don't love him. He would be miserable, and so should I! Oh! what shall I do! I promised to write and tell him the very day we would be married; and if I write about this he will come rushing back. I know he will. And he is so fiery, if he meets Pelham something will happen!"

"Hush! dear, don't cry. It is very unfortunate—very. Still it is best—much best. Albert will not break his heart; I don't fancy he has much heart."

"Auntie!" said the girl, eagerly, half piqued, half remorseful, "he was—he is fond of me. He will be unhappy, I know!"

"Yes, for a time; but men get over these things, Maddie—men like he, at least. He has other pursuits—his writing, his own pleasures; no woman is all-in-all to a man like that. Don't write just yet, dear. I must speak to your uncle and Mr. Clifford first. There, dear, dry your tears. You are happy, and that is enough."

Maddie's tears never came from very deep wells. She danced away, glad that the onus of future procedure was off her shoulders.

Mr. Elmhurst, to whom on retiring at night his wife confided the position of affairs, did not take it quite so coolly. He felt as a man for a man, and asked, indignantly,—

"This seems all very cool. There's Delmar to be thought of."

"Maddie would be wretched with him."

"She didn't think so three weeks ago."

"It was a mistake altogether; she never really cared for Albert, and we should not have allowed the engagement."

"That's all nonsense; we did allow it."

"Will you please listen! Maddie can't marry him now. Mr. Clifford will make her much happier. And that being so, nothing must be said to Albert until she is married."

"Good Heavens, Lucy! Why, he'll be here in a fortnight!"

"He'll do nothing of the sort. If we go writing to him and all that he'll think he can stop it and come back; and there'll be a scene, and worse. I wouldn't have Clifford and he meet for worlds. You must see that."

"Of course I do. But I say it need never have happened. I thought Maddie was wrapped up in him. Fickle as water, girls! No depending on them! I am angry with her; she's disappointed me. It's a deuce of a shame to treat a fellow so—and he away!"

Mrs. Elmhurst did not check these reflections; she looked on them as a safety valve. She was quite confident that no word would reach Delmar till she chose, and was not afraid of more than a little coldness to the girl for a day or two. She and Maddie had always ruled him; she by

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A VISITOR to the lava fields near Reykjshid, in Iceland, noticing wreaths of steam issuing from the summits of a small volcano, climbed up there, and found a band about two feet wide of beautiful plants, bearing large flowers, encircling the interior line of the crater. The steam warmed the flowers, and the rim of rocks protected them from the cold winds without.



superior energy and the hundred manoeuvres some wives learn; Maddle by simple witchery. He would be no trouble. He might grumble—and he did; but Mrs. Elmhurst was not sensitive, and cared little for a show of rebellion when the substance was wanting.

Just when she chose—she and Clifford—Albert Delmar should know that the man he had introduced to his betrothed's home had supplanted him.

(To be continued.)

## FACETIÆ

"How would you express in one word having met a doctor of medicine?" "Meta-physician."

FIRST CHILD: "Well, did you have a merry Christmas?" Second Child: "No; I had a tummy-ache—all the time!"

VILLAGE BOY (after interviewing etcher at work): "E see 'e's a-itchin', but it looks to me more as if 'e wor a-scratchin'."

SHE: "I had three men at my feet last night." Her Sister: "Is that all? There's certainly room for lots more."

FIRST TOT: My mamma says, "If the shoe fits, put it on." Second Tot: My mamma says, "If the shoe fits, take it off—it's too big."

MEDICAL PROFESSOR: "In a patient, what is the first thing to find out?" Student: "Find out if he can pay."

"Why is Edith crying so bitterly?" "She went to a tea-party this afternoon, and nobody noticed her engagement-ring."

"You say they are twins, and yet one is five years older than her sister!" "Yes. You see, one of them is married and one is not."

SHE: "Mr. Daubster, the artist, told me I was pretty as a picture." He: "I hope he didn't mean one of his own pictures."

"Oh!" gasped Mrs. Timid, as she saw a man stealing her plate; "It's a burglar!" "At your service, mum," politely returned the burglar.

TOURIST (to Highlander in full uniform): "Sandy, are you cold with the kilt?" Sandy: "Na, mon; but I'm nigh kilt wi' the cauld."

DEALER IN ANTIQUES: "The value of that jug is increased by its being unique. There is not another like it." Customer: "What is the price?" Dealer: "They're worth £10 apiece."

"I HAVE never met," he said, "more than two really lovely women." "Ah!" she said, looking up innocently into his face, "who was the other?"

"I AM so annoyed. I do not want to invite that horrid Mrs. Prim to my reception, yet I cannot slight her." "Give her invitation to your husband to post."

CUSTOMER: "Have you a book entitled 'Short Road to Wealth'?" Bookseller: "Certainly; and I suppose you'll want a copy of the penal code too!"

MR. FOSTER TIGHTFIST: "I say! let me have that five I lent you last night, will you?" Mr. Spender: "For Heaven's sake, have a little patience. I haven't had time to spend it yet!"

A SOLDIER who remarked that he had been in seven engagements was interrupted by a small boy, who said his sister had been engaged 11 times.

PRISCILLA: "What are young Winthrop and his wife quarrelling about so bitterly?" Priscilla: "Oh, about which of them loves the other most."

CHICKEN: "I quite dread facing old Ballion to ask him for his daughter's hand." Bickler: "You needn't dread facing him so much; it is when your back is turned to him that the greatest danger is to be apprehended!"

"MY son," said a father to a seven-year-old hopeful, "I must discipline you. Your teacher says you are the worst boy in the school." "Well, papa," was the reply, "only yesterday she told me I was like my father."

BROWN: "Why doesn't Walk stop to speak! Thought he knew you." Smith: "Use to; but I introduced him to the girl he married. Neither of them recognise me now!"

"WHY is it," they asked, "that you let your husband have his own way in everything?" "Because," she replied, "I like to have someone to blame when things go wrong."

BREACH MUSICIAN (to constant non-subscriber): "We should be most 'appy to put any gentleman who really can't afford to contribute on the free list!"

PATTIE: "Jack Hargreaves gave me these flowers. I hope you're not jealous, dear!" Hattie: "Oh, no. I told him I didn't want them, love."

DISTRICT LADY: "I hope you and your husband agree now, Mrs. Notact?" Mrs. Notact: "Oh, yes, mum, we agree on everything now." (After a pause.) "E said you was a meddlin' old fool 'oother day, mum!"

A TRAVELLER from the Soudan told a friend that he and a companion made fifty wild Arabs run. "However did you do it?" inquired his friend. "Oh! it was very easy. We ran, and they ran after us."

MRS. LE WORK: "I have trained my eldest daughter into a thorough housekeeper. There is nothing she does not know." Mrs. De Flight: "What a nice, handy maiden aunt she will make for your other daughters' children."

"WHAT do you think of your new neighbour?" asked the hostess of the "sweet" old lady who was calling. "You know that I never speak unkindly of anyone. I have nothing to say of her; but I will say of her husband that I feel very, very sorry for him."

"YOU doubtless cured the day you were born!" sneered the heroine, magnificent in her new autumn coat, to say nothing of her anger. The villain winced. "Believe me, no!" he protested. "I never swore until I was eight months old!" For in every life, after all, there is a period of innocence, ere yet inevitable depravity asserts its sway.

Mrs. SQUIDS: "That pretty Mrs. De Broker used to be Mr. De Broker's typewriter before she married him, didn't she?" Mrs. Squids: "Um—what was it you said?" Mr. S.: "I asked if Mrs. De Broker wasn't formerly Mr. De Broker's typewriter." Mrs. S.: "I'm sure I don't know. Why do you think so?" Mr. S.: "She has a habit of listening to him when he speaks."

THE driver of a prison-van was recently hailed by a would-be wag: "Got any room inside, Robert?" "There's room for one," replied the driver; "we kep' it for you." Not entirely disconcerted, the would-be wag had another shot. "What's your fare?" he asked. The answer, however, completely extinguished him. "Bread and water—same as you had before," said the driver.

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## SOCIETY.

THE bulk of the Duchess of Coburg's large fortune would have passed to her son, the late Prince Alfred, whose death will make his sisters co-heiresses.

PRINCESS VICTORIA is going to Copenhagen on a visit to Princess Charles of Denmark, who, it is needless to say, is eagerly looking forward to the coming of her mother and sister.

It is generally reported in Norfolk that Princess Victoria of Wales and Princess Charles of Denmark will spend several weeks during the late spring and early summer at Cromer, or some other place on the north coast of the county.

RINGS composed of one single diamond of large size, with no visible setting, are the newest and most expensive in vogue, and they are to be seen on only a few people at present, but are creeping gradually into fashion among those who can afford them.

It is probable that the Queen will spend the greater part of the second week of May at Buckingham Palace, when there will be a Drawing Room, and perhaps two of these functions, and one day will be devoted to the ceremonial at the South Kensington Museum.

It is a fact that no Court in the world presents such a picturesque and magnificent appearance as does that of Russia; at any function, therefore, the show is brilliant, but more especially, perhaps, at a ball, when the rich evening toilettes of the ladies, enhanced by rich jewels of priceless worth, add much to the already brilliant effect. The Russian dances are of a very stately description, and both the Emperor and Empress take part in them very thoroughly. The aspect of the Armorial Hall, where the supper is often laid, is grand beyond all description. The meal is not partaken of standing, as the majority of the Courts, but the guests sit down at the long rows of the tables. A procession is formed, which is headed by his Imperial Majesty and the most distinguished lady present, and the room is then entered in the order of precedence.

THE Queen is to leave Windsor for the Riviera on Thursday, the 9th inst., and will be absent from England for between five and six weeks. Her Majesty will cross the Channel in the Royal yacht *Victoria and Albert* from Dover (or from Folkestone if the weather is rough) to Calais, instead of proceeding by Portsmouth and Cherbourg, as in former years. The Queen is to leave Windsor about half-past ten in the morning, and will travel direct to the Admiralty Pier at Dover, proceeding through London from the South-Western line to the South-Eastern by the Waterloo Junction route. The Queen, who is to reach Calais about three in the afternoon, will start at once for Nice, where she is to arrive on Friday night. The Royal special train will proceed by the Nord line to Paris, and is then to pass round the city by the Petite Ceinture railway to the Lyons line, and the Queen and Princess Beatrice are to travel in Her Majesty's own double saloon.

THE Duchess of Albany and her daughter Princess Alice, intend to reside for at least two months at the Wilhelms Palace in Stuttgart. Her Royal Highness, who is closely connected by marriage with both the King and Queen of Württemberg, is great beloved by them, and without doubt her bright, sympathetic society cannot fail to be a consolation to their Majesties, for since the recent deaths of the Princess Katharina of Württemberg (mother of the King) and her sister, Princess Augusta of Saxe-Weimar, as well as the marriage—and consequent departure from home—of his only child, Princess Pauline (his daughter by his first marriage, and niece of the Duchess of Albany), they have been extremely lonely and depressed. During her stay in Stuttgart Princess Alice (who is already very accomplished for her age) will have her time fully employed, for it has been arranged that her Royal Highness is to receive daily instruction from her cousin Princess Pauline's former governess, Fraulein Berthe, who is an extremely clever woman.

## STATISTICS.

THERE are 4,500 women printers in England. Some butterflies have, as many as 30,000 distinct eyes.

THE population of the Soudan is numbered at 3,000,000, nearly all wholly uneducated.

A SCIENTIST has calculated that the eyelids of the average man open and shut no fewer than 4,000,000 times in the course of a single year of his existence.

AN average man of eleven stone has, it is said, enough iron in his constitution to make a ploughshare, and enough phosphorus to make half a million matches.

## GEMS.

HE who can suppress a moment's anger may prevent days of sorrow.

THERE is only one real failure in life possible; and that is not to be true to the best one knows.

THE beauty that addresses itself to the eyes is only the spell of the moment; the eye of the body is not always that of the soul.

CREATION is the organ, and a gracious man finds out its keys, lays his hands thereon, and wakes the whole system of the universe to the harmony of praise. Mountains and hills and other great objects are as it were the bass of the chorus; while the trees of the wood, and all things that have life, take up the air of the melodious song.

## HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

APRICOT SAUCE.—Three tablespoonfuls of apricot jam, two tablespoonfuls of water, the juice of half a lemon, half a glass of sherry, a drop or two of cochineal. Put the jam into a small saucepan; add to it the water and lemon juice. Simmer for five minutes, then add the sherry and cochineal. Strain round the pudding.

CRUMPKETS.—Beat well two eggs and put them into a quart of water, or, better, of half milk and half water, which must be warm; add a tablespoonful of yeast; beat in as much flour as will make them rather thicker than common batter pudding. Make your bake-stone very hot. Take a tin ring the size and shape of a muffin; pour in the batter, and turn quickly with a thin broad knife till done.

CABBAGE SOUP.—One thin slice of bacon, one teacupful grated carrots, one pint of cabbage stock, one bay leaf. Place in a soup pot and cook twenty-five minutes. Skim well and take out bay leaf. Now add quarter of a teaspoonful of pepper and one teaspoonful of salt. Rub together one tablespoonful of butter and one tablespoonful of flour; add to one pint of hot milk, and pour into your soup. Let it come to boiling point, and serve.

ALMOND CHERRIES.—Make some almond paste and divide it into three portions. Put each on a plate, and colour the first red with cochineal, the second green with some good vegetable green colouring, and leave the third the natural tint. Take about half a pound of glacé or crystallised cherries; carefully cut each open, but not so far as to split them in halves. Roll the paste into small balls about the size of a small hazel nut. Tuck a ball of paste into each cherry—never mind the shape—then roll it round several times in your hands. It will thus arrange and shape itself. Finally, give it a good roll in some castor sugar, and place it in a little fancy paper case. These different-coloured cherries are most dainty looking, and equally good to eat. Dates, with the stones removed and opened, and filled with the paste, are excellent; also good muscatel raisins, opened and stoned.

## MISCELLANEOUS.

CLOTH is now being successfully made from wood.

ELEPHANTS without tusks are numerous in Abyssinia.

THE Japanese never swear. Their language contains no blasphemous words.

CORREAN paper is so strong and dense that it can be used to cover umbrellas.

THE nightjar has a larger mouth in proportion to its size than any other bird.

SHEPHERD possesses a curious knife with 220 blades, all etched with portraits, landscapes, or other artistic designs.

A FRENCH doctor says that persons who attain their 30th year without suffering from any serious disease are likely—all things being equal—to live till they are at least 75 years of age.

A HAMBURG inventor has devised a penny-in-the-slot machine which sells milk and keeps the glasses clean, closing up when it is empty. It is to be used especially for schools.

ALASKAN babies rarely cry. When they do, they are held under a little stream of running water, usually under a barrel tap, until they stop.

IN the Chinese morgue one of the strange sights is a number of life-size dolls, which are burned, to accompany the corpses as their servants to the next world.

THE chief food products of the Ladronees are bread, fruit, and coconuts, which grow spontaneously in every part of the islands. One coconut-tree will feed a man.

COLLARS, cuffs, shirt fronts, &c., in America are being made of aluminium, coated with white Japanese varnish, on which designs in imitation of weaving and sewing are marked.

THE largest bell in France has been hung in the belfry of the Church of the Sacred Heart in Paris. It weighs twenty-eight tons, and can be heard at a distance of twenty-five miles, and its vibrations last six minutes.

THE most costly book in the Royal Library at Stockholm is a Bible. It is said that 160 asses' skins were used for its parchment leaves. There are 309 pages of writing, and each page falls but one inch each short of being a yard in length. The covers are solid planks, four inches thick.

FAIR-HAIRED people are said to be becoming less numerous than formerly. The ancient Jews were a fair-haired race; now they are, with a few exceptions, dark. So it is in a lesser degree with the Irish, among whom 150 years ago a dark-haired person was almost unknown.

THE oldest letter in the world is in the British Museum. Although written over thirty centuries ago, the characters are still legible. Its author was Panshe, a learned Egyptian, and it gives an interesting picture of life in Egypt during the reign of Rameses II.

To find the rarest bird in existence you must go to the mountains between Annam and Laos, where there is a certain kind of pheasant. For many years its existence was known only by the fact that its longest and most splendid plume was in much request by mandarins for their headgear. A single skin is worth four hundred dollars, and the bird living would be priceless, for it soon dies in captivity.

THE fireplace is a very important feature of winter life in Japan. Its beginning is a hole in the floor from one to two feet square; in this an iron pot is sunk in which live charcoal is piled. A wooden frame, or rack, big enough to cover the hole and about a foot high, is placed over this, and over all is thrown a large, thick quilt, the edges of which spread far out into the room. This is the heating apparatus of the house, and around it the family spend all their leisure time. The method of sitting is to put either one's feet or one's knees to the fire, and draw the quilt up as far as possible over lap, hands and arms. On the top of the quilt, where it falls over the frame, is often put a large square polished board, which serves as a table.



## NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

**EDITOR.**—The "s" is soft as "j."

**APPLICANT.**—Apply at Scotland-yard.

**EMPT.**—She can leave on the Sunday.

**M. A.**—We never give medical advice.

**A. K. N.**—Inquire at Inland Revenue Office.

**ANXIOUS INQUIRER.**—We do not answer by post.

**OLD CLOTHES.**—Your best chance is to take it to the dye.

**PAULA.**—If there is a dispute, you had better consult a lawyer.

**WORKED TON.**—You are not liable for the support of your aunt.

**WIFE'S SISTER.**—The husband takes the whole of the deceased's share.

**CANARYWOOD.**—Canarywood is so called because of its delicate salmon colour.

**BLACK SHEEP.**—What you describe is gambling, and consequently quite illegal.

**ONE IN GREAT DIFFICULTY.**—Search the parish register at the local church.

**A FAILURE.**—He is not at liberty to marry again without obtaining a divorce.

**REMY.**—We are not acquainted with any work exactly fulfilling your requirements.

**LENNIE.**—The cost varies according to your rent. Apply at the Inland Revenue Office.

**MISERABLE WIFE.**—Cruelty would also have to be proved. Better apply for a judicial separation.

**S. D.**—You had better consult a solicitor about both matters, and submit all documents for his enlightenment.

**AUTHOR.**—The address you mention is still correct, and the number of the street is 10. Thank you for your good wishes.

**ARMED ADMIRER.**—To meet the young lady in a proper manner you must have some mutual friend to introduce you.

**STRAD.**—If a real one, it is worth hundreds of pounds. But the great maker's name is frequently forged on worthless instruments.

**OLD DEBT.**—If the debt has not been acknowledged within the last six years, its recovery is barred by the Statute of Limitations.

**TAKE.**—We should not advise you to use the pressure; it would not be safe. The proper boiler is a bright copper preserving pan.

**MENIOR.**—It costs about £3,000 to patent an invention all over the world. There are sixty-four countries in which a patent can be protected.

**EVK.**—If the individual is reduced to the pitiable state you describe, the sooner he is in the hands of the experienced specialist the better.

**POPPER.**—To frost glass dissolve Epsom salts in beer and apply the solution with a brush. As the solution dries it crystallizes and may be varnished.

**YOUR LOVER.**—No, you certainly cannot marry on the income you have. In any event a boy of eighteen is altogether too young to think of marriage.

**SUFFERER.**—Unbroken chilblains are sometimes successfully treated by anointing them with turpentine, but a better application is tincture of iodine, with which they should be painted.

**A. T.**—His Holiness is not in receipt of any fixed annual income; the principal source of his revenue is the Peter's Pence, a collection taken up each year in every Roman Catholic church.

**DESPAIR.**—Children can only be received into the Foundling Hospital upon personal application of the mothers. Petitioners must not bring their children with them until desired to do so.

**S. A.**—Take equal proportions of spirits of wine and warm water, sponge the satin on the right side with this, working down the material and not across it. While still damp, iron on the wrong side.

**P. E.**—Make a good leather with warm water and soap, put the chain in and wash thoroughly, using a brush for any unobtainable parts. Any gold jewellery without stones may be washed in the same way.

**ROBERT.**—The only way to remove varnish stains from wood is to wash them out either with turpentine or spirits of wine, according to the basis of the varnish; the spot must, of course, be afterwards revarnished.

**BIRDIE.**—You may remove the stain, but, it is right to warn you, that if the colourings are not fast, the probability is that they will go more or less with the stain. This is, of course, the danger with all coloured fabrics.

**DOUBTFUL ADA.**—It is hard to tell you what means you could employ. You can only wait and see, as time goes on, whether he seems to be more in earnest or less so. Meanwhile, we should advise you not to think too much about him.

**J. W. B.**—Damp and ink stain: place tartaric acid upon that until as much as possible of the stain has been absorbed; then renew the acid, and when all the black is out treat what remains with oxalic acid; then iron up the paper from behind.

**CORA.**—Incessant washing makes the hair light and fluffy, and it is for that reason that it is bad. In order to give this appearance to the hair soda or ammonia is generally used. This takes all the nourishment from the skin, and makes the hair brittle.

**A. L.**—First rub with a paste made of powdered bath brick and sweet-oil or paraffin. Then carefully wipe off all oil, and polish with a soft cloth dipped in dry whiting, and finally with a chamade leather. You will find this plan most satisfactory.

## GOLDEN SILENCE.

Light words from your laughing lips  
Have a wondrous charm, love;  
Yet take care; a careless word  
May do a world of harm, love.  
So the word of cruel jest—  
Let it be withdrawn;  
Though your speech is silver sweet,  
Silence, dear, is golden!

If your neighbour in the way  
Does you any harm, love,  
Look with grace another way;  
That's a potent charm, love!  
Let no rude or angry word  
Your dear lips embolden;  
Nay, though speech is silver sweet,  
Silence, dear, is golden!

Words are arrows tipped with steel,  
Do not let them fly, love,  
A little spark is easy fanned—  
Better let it die, love,  
If you have no good to say,  
Let your lips be holden;  
For, though speech be silver sweet,  
Silence, dear, is golden!

**WORKER.**—It is not possible for hydrophobia to result from the bite of a dog that was not mad. Hydrophobia is not a spontaneous disease, and cannot be given to a person by a dog unless the animal was mad when it caused the wound.

**DOUGLAS.**—Apply to the soles as much copal varnish as they will absorb, setting them aside for a little time after each coating of the varnish to let it sink in before giving a fresh coat. Of course, the soles must be perfectly clean, as well as dry, before you put on the varnish.

**AVIR.**—The only venomous bird known is the Rhipidoch, or "Bird of Death," a native of New Guinea. It is the size of a pigeon, can fly only a few feet, and is easily caught. Its bite causes excruciating pains, loss of sight, and sometimes lockjaw. No person bitten by it has recovered, and death comes within a few hours.

**UGLY READER.**—Hold the head high, stretching the neck until conscious of the tension of the cords. In private, practice dropping the hand and allow it to roll listlessly about. The exercise of the muscles will help to consume the extra amount of fat. Tapping underneath the chin with the backs of the fingers is also a good remedy for a double chin.

**BABETTE.**—The guillotine consists of two upright posts surmounted by a cross-beam, and provided for the purpose of guiding an oblique-edged knife, the back of which is heavily weighted to make it fall swiftly and with force when the cord by which it is held aloft is let go. Although this instrument of death takes its name from Joseph Guillotine, a physician of Paris, who carried its adoption in the French National Assembly on March 20th, 1793, he was not its inventor, for it had been in use in other countries long before his day.

**SLEEPLESS.**—Over activity of the brain, which is the chief cause of sleeplessness, can be prevented to a certain extent by careful dieting. A glass of hot milk, or a plate of hot soup, is a good thing to take at bedtime. Nervous people, and those with weak hearts, should drink very little coffee. People who lead sedentary lives should partake of food which is easily digested, such as cold mutton, mutton chops, venison, tenderloin and sirloin steak, lamb chops and chicken. Asparagus should be eaten plentifully by brain-workers.

**TIERED OF ENGLAND.**—The climate of Virginia generally is both agreeable and healthful; it is much warmer in summer than we have experience of in this country, and there is hardly any winter there, as we know it; in the eastern division of the State there is a good deal of malaria and remittent fever caused by the swamps, but nothing of this sort in the western part; it should suit one in your physical condition very well; as for trade prospects, your friend on the spot is best able to give information.

**A VOTER.**—The legislative authority of Great Britain and Ireland is vested in a Parliament, consisting of the Sovereign, the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and the Commons. The House of Lords consists of two Archbishops, and 24 Bishops of England, and of about 680 Peers, who are entitled to seats by inheritance, creation, or election. The House of Commons consists of 870 persons, who are returned by the universities, counties, cities, and boroughs possessing the right of election. Of these 461 are returned by England, 24 by Wales, 103 by Ireland, and 73 by Scotland. Though delegated by particular places, they are bound, as Members of Parliament, to act for the general good of the country.

**ALIAS.**—Most of the European sovereigns have pseudonyms. Queen Victoria is partial to that of the Countess of Salinas. The Queen of Portugal assumes the name of the Marchioness of Villares, the Queen Isabella that of the Countess of Toledo. The Empress Frederic is fond of being known as the Countess de Lingen. The King of the Belgians favours the name of Count Ravenstein. The King of Portugal sinks his identity in the Count of Buralles. The Prince of Wales assumes the title of the Earl of Chester; the Prince of Bulgaria that of Count de Murray; while the Crown Prince of Sweden is always known when travelling as Count de Carlsberg. Lastly, though the Empress Eugenie's pseudonym is well-known, she still travels, as she did twenty-five years ago, under the name of Countess de Pierrefonds.

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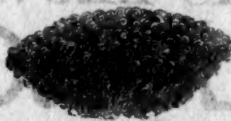
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